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THE KINGDOM AND THE KING  
ACCORDING TO LUKE



# THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

## According to Luke

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER . . . . .	1
PART I	
IN SILENTIO ET IN SPE	
SECTION I. JESUS AND GOD . . . . .	17
SECTION II. PREPARATION . . . . .	27
PART II	
THE MISSION OF JESUS	
SECTION I. GOOD NEWS . . . . .	43
SECTION II. THE ERA OF RELEASE; THE KINGDOM OF GOD AMONG MEN . . . . .	67
PART III	
THE GREAT SYMBOLS	
SECTION I. THE SYMBOL OF A MANGER . . . . .	102
SECTION II. THE SYMBOL OF A CROSS . . . . .	110
SECTION III. THE SYMBOLS OF AN EMPTY GRAVE AND OF A LIVING PRESENCE . . . . .	118
SECTION IV. THE SYMBOL OF A COMMON MEAL . . . . .	126



# THE KINGDOM AND THE KING ACCORDING TO LUKE

## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

ANY one of the Gospels can be read aloud in a couple of hours.

A certain proportion of the content of the first three is common to all. This residuum of material forms as nearly as possible the historic basis of our knowledge of the life of Jesus Christ. It is essential to every student of the Gospels that he should distinguish and thoroughly study those passages.

The choice of the further material collected by each successive editor of that original content then becomes an arresting study. What did it matter to Mark and Matthew and Luke and to the masters behind them that the Church—already organised and thoughtful—should carry forward into its tradition ? How best use Peter's reminiscences and after-thoughts ? How travel back from Paul's great deductions<sup>1</sup> concerning the Cross and the Gospel of forgiveness, the victorious Christ and the life of the

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<sup>1</sup> Most of Paul's great letters were probably written between A.D. 50 and 60. The date of Mark's Gospel may be about A.D. 70. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are of later date.

## 2 THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

Spirit? How place the Man Christ Jesus, first in the succession in which 'as concerning the flesh' he came; and second, in relation to the greater world to which he was already making his appeal? And how best present the chosen facts and symbolic incidents? Direct though they are, the Gospels are conscious books. The writers knew perfectly the impressions and convictions which they meant to convey. They wrote under a deep sense of responsibility.

MARK introduces his *motif* in his very first words (i. 1). Without further preface he plunges into the heart of his subject, and carries his readers along with a sort of imperious urgency. He tells the story of this mission, the main events of it, the way-marks of it, the tragedy of it, the triumph of its unfinished close, and he ends his book as abruptly as he began it, leaving the first visitors to the grave 'in trembling and astonishment, afraid even to speak' (xvi. 8. The following paragraphs are a later addition. See note in R.V.). It is '*the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God.*'

The intentions of the later biographers, who had Mark's book in their hands, are more special. They wrote for more advanced communities, scattered over a larger area, developing, as indeed they must, diverse local character and tradition. The additional material supplied by each has as a main object the clarifying and ordering of the thinking of his particular audience concerning him whom they had received as Saviour and Lord.

Like every Jewish thinker, MATTHEW sees all

history from the point of view of God. The rule of God, the continuous purpose of God, the immanence of God, are the primal, the fundamental facts of history. All events, especially the events of the few years with which he deals, are noteworthy only as they bear upon those great facts. The life and words of Jesus are to him both the supreme illustration and the supreme revelation of those facts. Matthew is obsessed, therefore, by the idea of historic continuity, continuity within the order of God. Jesus came within that order ; his teaching—for in Matthew's conception Jesus is the Divine Teacher—is essentially continuative teaching. The book itself is a sequel. The subject is the fulfilment of a long Hope, and all the material at his command is made (sometimes almost compelled) to illustrate and apply his dominant idea. His forward look is simply the assurance of the further continuation of his own history. The Kingdom of Heaven is eternal ; the sequence of the activity of Godhead moves ever onward through the ages until history itself culminates in the universal revelation of the King in His glory (xxv.).

Certainly with Mark's book beside him, probably with Matthew's,<sup>1</sup> and also with large gleanings of new information at his disposal, LUKE does quite another thing. He sees the same good news as the possession of the world. He begins indeed in little Bethlehem, takes us to the Jewish temple, tells incident after incident of apparently purely local interest ; yet

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<sup>1</sup> Luke rather carefully avoids needless repetition ; where he repeats the motive and emphasis are always his own.

succeeds, in rather less space than is used by Matthew, in giving to the world, even through the use of those very incidents, a catholic book in the largest sense. For Luke's is the liberating book of a solid humanity : it contains the charter of the universal brotherhood, of sex equality, of the denial of all right of special privilege. The life of Jesus is the life of every man's effective Brother Man. Let any missionary from any part of the world tell of the effect upon any kind of audience of those two matchless tales which sum up all relationship in heaven and on earth, the tales of the welcoming father (xv.) and of the compassionate brother (x.). Ask, if one need ask, whether either required any exposition whatever, whether the mere telling did not touch the most intimate emotions, or awaken at least for the moment the most hardened conscience. Those two tales are the very soul of this Gospel.

All three are living books, for all three have the forward look. Mark ends abruptly, he only professes to tell the beginning ; they were living the next chapter when he wrote. Matthew ends with 'the end of the ages.' Luke had possibly already written, in part at least, his own sequel, showing how the Son of Man was present still, active and effective as ever. (*Cf. Acts i. 1.*)

As it is with Luke's book that we are here concerned, some further introductory notes may be added.

1. Critical problems do not come within the scope of our purpose, nor do they affect it. It suffices that this writer wrote his books as a representative of a

community far enough removed from the lifetime of his Subject to have formed convictions of a quite definite kind concerning his place in human history and experience. The Jesus of Luke was the Jesus whom they already knew as Lord in Antioch and Philippi and Rome ; the facts concerning Jesus were already being realised pictorially, surely the sanest mode of realisation if universality and immortality be the object. Further, by the time this book was written the religion which bears his name had become articulate, 'the creative process was well advanced if not completed.'<sup>1</sup> We take the book on these terms as we find it.

2. We used to be taught that Luke's Gospel is Paul's Gospel. We were asked to trace Paul's mind and influence, especially in the undercurrent of guiding thought, the thought, namely, of the forgiveness, grace, and love of God made known through Jesus Christ. It is impossible to suppose that if still alive when the book was written, Paul was not deeply interested in his friend's work ; yet it is contrast rather than resemblance that strikes us. Luke has none of the urgency of Paul ; he contents himself with the presentation of incident or parable, and knowing that

'The Son of Man  
Stands out alone, living, glorious, divine,  
Out of the midst,'

leaves his readers to form their own convictions upon the fact. Again, the interest of Paul in the earthly life of Jesus is of the slightest. 'Though we have

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<sup>1</sup> Principal Fairbairn, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*.

## 6 THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

known him after the flesh, we now know him so no more,' he says ; we have entered into a new region of fellowship. Luke, on the other hand, broods with tender delight over each human detail ; it is a delight quite contagious ; we can almost accompany him while on his quest for the reminiscences of those who had been 'eye-witnesses from the beginning'—to Bethlehem and the hill country of Judæa, to Jerusalem and Bethany and Jericho, to Capernaum and Nain ; and we learn to know Jesus after the flesh so well that the knowledge after the spirit is ours before we know it. 'Our heart burns within us as he himself talks with us by the way.' Luke conducts us to the very same Lord of the very same spiritual world as does his master Paul, although by a different route.

3. The book is a revelation, therefore, of the man who wrote it, a greatly gifted man—seer and poet, physician and psychologist,<sup>1</sup> biographer and historian, master of the art of literature ; finely human, virile and tender, with a genius for friendship which draws the heart of his readers to this day. Lovers of Luke are never lacking. We hasten breathlessly after Mark, we travel thoughtfully with Matthew, but we linger confidently and reverently beside Luke. Whoever was the prototype of Bunyan's Evangelist, Luke surely suggested his Greatheart.

As for the book—'the most beautiful book in the world'<sup>2</sup>—it is beautiful, and its true beauty lies

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<sup>1</sup> 'Psychology as a science is young, but as an art it is old.' (?)

<sup>2</sup> It seems impossible to write of Luke's Gospel without quoting Renan's phrase.

hidden where the brilliant Frenchman somehow failed to find it, in the vision it gives of a Son and a Brother of our very own, who not only satisfies our mind, possesses our heart, and draws us out of our little selves, but who illuminates for us this perplexing world, discovers to us its divine ordering, its possibilities, its unbreakable link—sin and death notwithstanding—with the Eternal and Unchangeable, that wise and tender Fatherhood, Who is GOD.<sup>1</sup>

4. Luke's plan is set forth in his Preface. He had carefully collected the reminiscences of such eye and ear witnesses as were still alive.<sup>2</sup> These, with the help of the already published narratives, he went on to arrange in biographical order. (See Appendix I. for short analysis.)

5. The plan which suits the purpose of this little book may, or may not, have been in the mind of Luke himself. I think that it was so.

After the idyll of the birth and infancy of Jesus, which we leave for later consideration, there follows a passage which contains a summary, almost an exposition, of the life and ministry of Jesus in their relation to the world as he met it (ii. 41–iv. 30). It

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<sup>1</sup> 'To give a human portrait so gracious as to exalt our very idea of Deity is a feat which no other piece of historical literature has achieved or even approached.' (?)

<sup>2</sup> 'The true historical genius lies in selecting the great crises, the great agents, the great movements ; in making these clear to the reader in their real nature, in passing over with the lightest and slightest touch numerous events and persons, but always keeping clear before the reader the plan of the composition. The historian may dismiss years with a word, and devote considerable space to a single incident.'—Professor Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and Roman Citizen*.

is with this passage as our guide that we shall consider that life and ministry in Parts I. (Sections I. and II.) and II. (Sections I. and II.).

### PART I. IN SILENTIO ET IN SPE

ii. 41–iv. 13.

*Section I.*—The incident of the early visit to the temple (ii. 41–50). Through the gravely beautiful glimpse of the awakening of high desire and resolve in the mind of the young boy, Luke reaches at once the very core of his subject, the call for human sonhood and sonliness towards the Divine Father, who is God.

*Section II.*—The formal dedication of Jesus upon the occasion of his visit to his cousin's mission (iii. 1–12) when he took his place, deliberately and publicly, not with the preacher but with the hearers; followed immediately by the retreat in the wilderness, the crisis of which is parabolically described (iv. 1–18). The wilderness is the battle-ground between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between truth and falsehood, between right motive and action and wrong motive and action, between the Spirit of Love, who is God, and the Spirit of Pride, who is the devil. This was the first 'dark night of the soul' of Jesus, and it decisively affected his every conviction and action to the end of his life.

## PART II. THE MISSION OF JESUS

## iv. 16-30.

*Section I.*—The visit to Nazareth, whither Luke brings Jesus to apply to himself the words of the Servant of Jehovah, and to expound to his own townsfolk the manner of his mission as he foresaw it. The Gospel is, in fact, the record of the fulfilment of the promise then made. That Luke intends this Nazareth incident to be read as the key to the whole story is borne out by the close of it. Jesus came with a message of emancipation for every region of human life ; the world of men, represented here by his own village, would have none of it.

*Section II.*—The fifth clause of the ‘Nazareth Manifesto’ gathers into one phrase the whole Gospel of human redemption, which is the Kingdom of God, and requires a Section to itself.

## PART III. THE GREAT SYMBOLS

In Part III. we turn to the symbols upon which the Christian Church has based those doctrines which have gathered around the Person of Jesus as Christ :

Section I.—The Symbol of a Manger.

Section II.—The Symbol of a Cross.

Section III.—The Symbols of an Empty Grave and of a Living Presence.

Section IV.—The Symbol of a Common Meal.

Luke starts with the manger, and to start elsewhere with him as our guide may seem unjustifiable. But although Luke as a biographer began with the

## 10 THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

beginning, none knew better than he that the manger is the symbol of a fact discovered only after the mortal life of Jesus was past ; and that in Jesus' own time the appeal he made to men was made primarily through his gracious humanity, the noble idealism of his message, the secret intention and the active force which made his ministry effective, all so fully portrayed in this book. And, Jesus himself, of all lovers of men, best knew that men are only truly reached where they are. Parts I. and II. are one more attempt to bring him to meet us where very many of us of our time are. If we do meet him there we shall at the least endeavour to pass on with him where he, perchance, is. Luke will not fail us at either meeting-place.

6. I must add a few words in explanation of the intention of this little book. Professor Ramsay says that 'Luke's style is compressed in the highest degree and he expects a great deal from the reader.' This is true, and it is also true that most of his readers of the twentieth century are people who lead over-crowded lives. It is of such that I have thought. This is not a scholar's book, far less a theologian's book, and is not intended for scholars or theologians ; it is a book offered to people of little leisure for study. The purpose, whether fulfilled or not, has been two-fold :

*First*, to suggest for individual or group meditation, what seem to have been some of Luke's underlying ideas ;

*Second*, to suggest lines of thought which may help to link Luke's ideas with our present conditions

and needs, aspirations and purposes, and to do this with prayer as the end of the meditation.

There are Sections and Sub-sections. Each of the latter consists of—

(a) *Extracts* from the Gospel itself, which will, I hope, be examined in their own setting and made the real basis of thought. It is Luke's reading of his Subject, no one else's, which we should seek.

(b) *Notes*, few and quite simple.

(c) One, or more, suggestion, '*For Thought and Prayer*,' followed by a short prayer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The short ejaculations or prayers are gathered from many sources, ancient and modern. Prayers should be anonymous and catholic, but I should like to acknowledge the kind permission given for the use of *Prayers for an Indian College*.

## APPENDIX I

## A SYNOPSIS OF THE GOSPEL

I. The Infancy and Childhood of Jesus (i. 5–iii.).

II. The Galilean Mission (iv. 1–ix. 50). A mission largely of healing both of body and mind. The impression conveyed is of tender pity for sufferers of any kind, reinforced by healing power which passed to the sufferer through eye and hand and voice. A ministry also of teaching, simple and happy by choice. Parables of beginnings, of hope, of an open door for all into an abounding life, are recorded. ‘Forbid no one,’ is the last word spoken.

Controversy was present almost from the first. It is always associated with the liberating movement of Jesus. Jesus and his followers did not keep fasts as did other religious groups (v. 33); they associated with social and religious outcasts (v. 27–32); they broke the Sabbath law (vi. 5, 7–9). So timid are even good men to step out into the free life of the sons of God.

III. The crowded months of the slow journey via Peræa to Jerusalem (ix. 51–xix. 28). ‘I came to cast fire upon earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?’ Luke now suggests that Jesus deliberately set himself, while still continuing his mission, to widen the breach which had been threatening between himself and the official Church, and to challenge those around him to take a side. Not only so, but the terms upon which he would receive followers became more stern; the teaching concerning wealth and poverty, self-denial and the cross, solemn responsibility for the use made of the gift of life, the order of precedence in the Kingdom of God; and above all the teaching concerning a fearless, unmeasured trust in the Divine Fatherhood, all these suggest this at

the least, that the citizenship of the Kingdom of God is no light undertaking to be easily won or maintained. On the other hand, it is in this Section that the vision of that Kingdom as the only true human Society is disclosed.

IV. The days spent in Jerusalem between the formal entry of Jesus into the city as its King, and his death (xix. 29–xxiii. 56). Five days of concentrated labour in public conflict and private instruction ; betrayal by an Apostle ; hasty trials conducted by Church and State ; sentence of death ; crucifixion.

V. The Epilogue (xxiii. 56–xxiv. 53). The silent victory of Jesus, and the inauguration of the new Order of the Kingdom of God on earth.

## APPENDIX II

### THE MAIN CONTENTS OF LUKE'S GOSPEL PECULIAR TO ITSELF

#### I. *Incidents*

The Preface and Story of the Birth and Infancy of Jesus (i.–ii. 40).

Jesus' Visit to the Temple during His Boyhood (ii. 41–50).

Visit to Nazareth (iv. 16–30).

The Anointing by the outcast Woman in Simon's house (vii. 36–50).

The Mission of the Seventy (x. 1–24).

The Visit to Martha and Mary (x. 38–42).

The Contention concerning Precedence during the Last Supper (xxii. 24–30).

The Visit to Herod during the Roman Trial (xxiii. 4–16).

The 'Daughters of Jerusalem' (xxiii. 27–29).

## 14 THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

The Penitent Thief (xxiii. 39–43).

The Walk to Emmaus (xxiv. 13–35).

The Passage which links the Gospel with its Sequel  
(xxiv. 44–49).

### II. *Acts*

The Draught of Fishes (v. 1–11).

The Raising of the Widow's Son at Nain (vii. 11–17).

The Healing of the decrepit Woman (xiii. 10–21).

The Healing of Ten Lepers (xvii. 4–19).

The Call of Zaccheus (xix. 1–10).

### III. *Parables*

The Good Samaritan (x. 25–37).

The Rich Fool (xii. 13–16).

The Supper and the Guests (xiv. 15–24).

The Woman and her Lost Coin (xv. 8–10).

The Prodigal Son (xv. 11–32).

The Unfaithful Steward (xvi. 1–9).

Dives and Lazarus (xvi. 19–32).

The Unrighteous Judge (xviii. 1–8).

The Pharisee and the Publican (xviii. 9–24).

The Ten Pounds (xix. 11–28).

### IV. *Teachings*

Especially in chapters xi.–xiv., also in xvii.

## PART I

### IN SILENTIO ET IN SPE

**SECTION I.—Jesus and God.**

A Father.

A Son, and Sons.

The Medium of Communication.

**SECTION II.—Preparation.**

With John.

The Desert.

The Visions.



## SECTION I.—JESUS AND GOD

### I. A FATHER (ii. 41–50).

‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.’ . . . ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God’ (iv. 8–12). ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. . . . This do and thou shalt live’ (x. 27, 28).

‘The God of the living, for all live to Him’ (xx. 87–89).

‘They were astonished at the Majesty of God’ (iv. 43). Also vii. 16; xiii. 13; xviii. 43).

‘Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine’ (xv. 11–31).

‘Be not anxious . . . your Father knoweth’ (xii. 6–31).

‘While he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him’ (xv. 11–31).

‘To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God’ (xviii. 9, 10).

‘Fear not, little flock; it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom’ (xii. 32).

‘I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and understanding, and hast revealed them to babes. Even so, Father’ (x. 21, 22).

### Notes.

1. It was, like our own, an independent, self-sufficing world. Men, even religious men, rather condescended to God. The impression conveyed in the Gospels is that God had become a sort of national possession, enshrined in a jewelled casket or

## 18 THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

preserved in the archives. He belonged to the people rather than they to Him.

Here was a Jewish boy, standing upon the threshold of his life, making his first independent choice, and he chooses to be a son to God. He is, from the moment of self-realisation, first of all, in all things, with all deliberation, a dependent, obedient and loving son. He grew into a vigorous manhood and became a Master of men ; but at the heart of him wrought a motive force which governed and united all forces which moved him, the motive force of his sonhood. It follows of necessity that the contribution made by Jesus to human experience, the only all-inclusive contribution which he cared to make, was that of his own knowledge of God.

2. Jesus started from the high Hebrew assumption that God is, is Person, is Lord of His Universe, making and guiding, besetting and pervading it, and accepting to the full His responsibility towards it. A dead God, an absentee God, a limited God, except as He may in His wisdom limit Himself, would have been unthinkable to Jesus. He guarded the Godhead of God to the uttermost implications of it, humbly through his own reverence, firmly when proclaiming His absolute authority, almost fiercely when His honour seemed at stake (see xvi. 14).

3. In the conception of Jesus the world of men suffered from one need, the need of an acknowledged Father, and he saw God as Father striving to express Himself so as to be understood. He saw the processes of nature and the movements of history alike, as Divine Fatherhood—mind, heart, power—at work.

He saw every living thing, even the despised sparrow,<sup>1</sup> as within the cognisance of a Father who will spend Himself, limit Himself, sacrifice Himself for any one of His little ones, exercising that holy wisdom which, seeing the end from the beginning, makes for its highest good. He is a Father 'near with all kinds of nearness.'

The will and power to heal, feed, console, forgive, upraise, which he constantly exercised were to him no other than exertions of the will and power working for wholeness which are of a God who is Father.

Although there are indications that Jesus felt the difficulties of faith,<sup>2</sup> he did not solve them ; he neither explained them nor explained them away. He transcended them. He was himself acutely sensitive to every sign of the presence and action of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God ?'

'For every bird which finds its way to a woman's hat it is estimated that ten birds are killed or wounded.'—Mrs. Speedwell-Massingham.

<sup>2</sup> The difficulties of faith in a Fatherly government of the world are great. God is unseen and unheard ; He tends to recede into unreality and space. Convictions concerning Him reached by each generation under its own circumstances and expressed accordingly tend to become traditions and unrealities when imposed upon the next. Doctrines of God do not necessarily imply contact with God. 'The blind old god of goodness' is to thousands of honest men and women a god so helpless as to be negligible. They cannot but feel—even when willing to acknowledge human responsibility for evil conditions—that the original responsibility rests with God. The greatest difficulties are probably personal and moral. We are slow to take all risks and to fling ourselves, even by way of experiment, upon the Father-God of Jesus. But only so we shall prove Him. It may be literally true that 'Divine Love has kept the world a-waiting that the world may go a-seeking.'

## 20. THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

God ; he set himself to co-operate with what seemed to him to be the purpose of God. Thus he set in motion forces—creative, healing, vitalising forces—which wrought with and witnessed to that purpose. ‘God hath visited His people !’ the wondering crowd exclaimed.

Not even when the mystery and the agony of his own life pressed most heavily upon him did the faith of Jesus in the Father flinch. All his problems were not solved, but the balance was with Love.

### *For Thought and Prayer.*

1. Let us refresh our memory of the later Hebrew vision of God, as in Isa. xl. 9–31, or Psalms ciii. and civ.
2. ‘We all give up something of our God’ (*e.g.* His justice for His mercy, or *vice versa*). Let us think over this saying in the light of the mind of Jesus, in so far as we can discover it. Did he yield anything of his God ?

‘Give to us, O Lord, some understanding of Thy paths on earth ; a heart without stain ; watchfulness for Thy inspirations ; a glowing love and desire for Thyself.’

## II. A SON—AND SONS.

‘I must be in the things of my Father’ (ii. 41–52. Also iv. 43). ‘Father . . . not my will, but Thine, be done’ (xxii. 42). ‘Father, into Thy hand I commit my spirit’ (xxiii. 45).

‘Seek ye first His Kingdom’ (xii. 29. Also xvi. 18 ; xx. 25). ‘Trade ye herewith till I come’ (xix. 11–28).

‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom’ (xii. 32).

'Love . . . and ye shall be the sons of the Most High' (whole passage, vi. 27-37).

'A certain man had two sons' (xv. 11-32). (See also the story of two sons in Matt. xiv. 28.)

### *Notes.*

The relationship between child and father is primary and enduring. 'A certain man had two sons.' The younger, on coming of age, demanded his share of the property and set off, putting as great a distance between himself and his home as possible. He ruined himself and returned to his father a broken waif. His brother stayed at home, attended to the property, but cultivated in his soul the mood of a slave. There is little to choose between them as sons; self-determination whether in crude or in subtle form is a manifest denial of the spirit of sonhood. But sons they remained; the younger saw this better than the elder.

There is, on the other hand, the way of response to the interior summons of the relationship; a son may become as the years pass the intimate comrade and friend of his father; their interests become one; any question of command and obedience between them would be ludicrous. Yet the father remains 'Father,' and the son 'Son.'

If, as Jesus maintained, the relationship between man and God is that of son with Father, to evolve a true sonhood must be the way to evolve a true humanity. The implications of the relationship on the filial side must therefore be of vital importance to human advance, whether individual or corporate.

1. Personal humility, dependence, trust, are freely reposed in the personal Father. Thus, for a son to bear burdens on the basis that he is his own burden-bearer is irrelevant (xii. 4-7; 22-30); or to set Self-hood (*e.g.* self-dependence,<sup>1</sup> self-determination, self-realisation, etc.) before him as his ideal of life is irrelevant (see the temptations, iv. 1-18). A man is not less a man that he is submissive to his superior or to his Father. Jesus himself is not less, but more, a man, that he is a trustful and dependent son.

2. The true spirit of a son can only be attained through experiments in freedom. The Father of Jesus has no use at all for sons who remain undeveloped and irresponsible. The father of the prodigal could have kept his son at home and prevented his physical and moral collapse simply by refusing supplies, but he would not have made a man of that particular lad. The master who left his servants free of control and with money in hand took heavy risks, but in nine cases out of the ten his trust was justified, and the men were ready for greater trust. For the training of His sons the Father will limit Himself and will bear the burden of His self-limitation (which includes constant misunderstanding); He will even permit blunders such as the experience of free moral choice must inevitably produce; and He will wait with Divine patience for the fulfilment of His hope.

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<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, no such condition as independence. The man who reckons on it is, simply, a fool (xii. 16-20). Man would become a monster but for the bounds which he may not pass.

Man could only evolve his humanity, which, according to Jesus, is his sonhood, by experiments in humanity. It has been a long, laborious, often retrogressive process, but it was the only way of it.

The point made by Jesus is that God does not fail.

3. The Father whom Jesus claimed to know is good. He is Goodness itself.<sup>1</sup> It follows that goodness must be the characteristic of His whole family and of every individual son and daughter. An element of severity enters into the words of Jesus when any lowering of the moral standard is threatened. ‘Dieu me pardonnera, c'est son métier’ will not serve the prodigal who remains in the far country. He has neither desire nor right that it should. The paternal and filial relationship is necessarily moral in character.

The Father of Jesus—who is God—has never had His chance even with the followers of Jesus. Yet, if Jesus is to be trusted, there is no measure by which to measure the creative and dynamic forces of pure good which would be set free in this tragic world through the simple acceptance by each son of the implications of his sonhood. And if any should think the discipline implied derogatory it is sufficient to recall the fine poise of the character of Jesus as a son of God and a free man ; the balanced simplicity and dignity, gentleness and power, humility and authoritativeness. He lost nothing but gained everything of his manhood through his sonhood.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement may be challenged, but only by those who reject the mind of Jesus.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

‘Our reach towards God is the outcome of the reaction of our whole nature to life.’ Let us consider this saying in the light of our knowledge of the reaction of the nature of Jesus to life.

‘Still to our devotions let us join our best endeavours, and make our earth comply with Thy heaven.’

## III. THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION.

He withdrew in the wilderness and prayed (when his popularity was great) (iv. 16). He went out into the mountain to pray, and remained all night in prayer to God (before the choice of apostles) (vi. 12). He took with him Peter and John and James and went up into the mountain to pray (at the crisis of his mission) (xx. 44). He was parted from them about a stone’s cast, and he kneeled down and prayed (on the evening of the betrayal) (xxii. 39-46).

As he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray. . . .’ He said to them, ‘When ye pray, say—

“Father ;  
 “Hallowed by Thy Name ;  
 “Thy Kingdom come ;  
 “Give us day by day our bread for the coming day ;  
 “And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us ;  
 “And bring us not into temptation”’ (vi. 1-4. R.V. margin).

‘Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened unto you. . . .’ (whole passage, xi. 9-13).

‘If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed you would say to this sycamine tree, “Be thou rooted up and be thou planted in the sea” ; and it would obey you’ (xvii. 5, 6).

*Notes.*

According to Jesus the essential condition of the coming of the Kingdom of God (which is the Kingdom of Father, Sons, and Brothers) on earth is acquaintance with God as Father. The crying need of the world was (and is) for men and women *en rapport* with God.

1. The glimpses we have of Jesus himself, most intimate of sons—of his joy of being, his irresponsibility for himself, his growth and worth and fulfilment, his sensitiveness to and co-operation with the mind of God as he conceived it, and the consequent setting in motion of forces of health and righteousness and lovingkindness—make his secret of the means of communication infinitely worth our discovering.

2. His way was the way of prayer. It was in the wilderness and on the mountain-top that he ‘made his soul.’<sup>1</sup>

Prayer was not to him a formal act;<sup>2</sup> it was heart claiming communion with heart.

It was desire, trust, love, making its way Fatherwards.

It was not so much asking as it was confiding; it was resting in the Everlasting Arms.

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<sup>1</sup> The wilderness and the mountain-top are not accessible to all of us. A friend of mine reared a family of stirring children in one small miserable room. She made her soul, and a great soul it was, in her one armchair, with her apron thrown over her head. ‘The bairns ken that mother wants a minute’s quiet and stop their romps,’ she said.

<sup>2</sup> Prayer, especially common prayer, must have its dignity, for the Father is King. Here we are concerned only with the intimacy of the Family, the personal communion of son with Father.

It was thinking with the Father; the son instinctively knows the Father's mind. 'I thank Thee, O Father . . . even so, Father.'

3. But the Father's approach precedes the son's approach. The son only is because the Father willed him to be. Jesus found himself in the things of his Father, because in the temple his Father had found him. All true communication begins with God. 'The spirit life is not evolved out of ourselves, as a tree from a seed; it is offered to us for appropriation.'<sup>1</sup>

4. The trustworthiness of Jesus as the exponent of the personal Fatherhood of God is bound up with the solutions he found to the problems of the life of prayer. Did he ask, seek, knock in vain? Did he exercise a faith which was not followed by 'miracles'? Did his sycamore tree stand where it did?

His whole point is that life is beset by the fatherlessness of God if man would but realise it, try it, rest in it. Himself was satisfied.

### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Are we satisfied with our communication with the Father? If not, it is worth while to ask of ourselves some straight questions.

Have we fully met the challenge implied in Jesus' doctrine of the personal Fatherhood of God? Or have we approached God as if He were our 'tribal deity,' bound to take our view of the matter concerned, whether right or wrong?

Was the failure of response by any chance due to

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<sup>1</sup> Father Tyrrell.

some failure on our part ? to our mood ? motive ? intention ?

What of the quality of our faith ?

Are we satisfied that the Father has made no response ?

Was our prayer a real response to the Father in God ? Did we really say, and mean, 'Father' ?

'Lord, teach us to pray, and to pray always.'

'God of Thy goodness give me Thyself, for Thou art enough for me ; and may I nothing ask that is less than may be full worship of Thee, for if I ask anything that is less, ever me wanteth. Only in Thee I have all.'

## SECTION II.—PREPARATION

*Introductory Note.*—(Read ii. 40, 51, 52 ; iii. 23 ; xxi. 19.)

Jesus returned with his parents to home subjections, village schooling, apprenticeship to his father's trade, and to the narrowness and gossip and petty politics of a remote mountain village. Visits to Jerusalem no doubt introduced him to the national situation, the subjection to Rome, the secret unrest everywhere, and the policy of the national leaders, also to the condition of the Church. The slow

journeys to and from the capital would show him the poverty and disheartenment of the country folk.

He was in his own nature a true oriental. He made no haste. He was twelve years old when he saw himself in the concerns of God ; he was thirty years old before he moved. The self-mastery, the faith, of those long years are almost unimaginable to us Westerns who must ever be up and doing whether we are ready to do or not.

But we can hardly exaggerate the influence of this long discipline in the making of the man. Jesus had great physical strength. His character was finely poised and tempered. He knew nature, human nature, the sacred writings, and he knew God. He had reached matured convictions upon the subjects of which he must treat. He realised vocation, responsibility, and power.

## I. WITH JOHN.

‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness’ (iii. 1-18. See also i. 15-17).

‘John the Baptist is come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and ye say, “He hath a devil !” The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, “Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners !” And wisdom is justified of all her children’ (vii. 33, 34).

‘Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard : the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is he who shall find no occasion of stumbling in me’ (vii. 22, 23).

‘The law and the prophets were until John ; from that time the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached, and the violent

take it by force. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fall' (xvi. 16, 17).

*Notes.*

1. Luke is greatly interested in the Baptist. (See i. 5-24, 57-80; iii. 1-20; v. 33, 34; vii. 18-80; ix. 7-9; xvi. 16, 17; xx. 1-8; Acts i. 5; xiii. 24; xviii. 24-xix. 7.) The intention in every instance is to contrast John's method and message with the later method and message of Jesus, while showing that the first provided a needful moral preparation for the second.

2. John met the crowds which gathered around him with their bewildered cry, 'What must we do?' with words of stern moral recall. He flung men back upon conscience and responsibility. The baptismal rite signified repentance and cleansing, and a new beginning.

3. Jesus took his place, not with the preacher of righteousness, but with his penitents, and accepted as an act of self-dedication to the same cause of righteousness, the baptism to which they submitted themselves. He would have no hermitage, no distinguishing garb, no pulpit, no rites, none of the props and shelters and separations to which leaders resort to ease the moral strain of their calling. He would be, and became, without reservation, a 'Son of Man.'

To venture a baptism of repentance with the sinner is to venture brotherhood to the uttermost; it is also to venture a spiritual loneliness far more lonely than John's wilderness.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. An old evangelist told that before he went out to preach he preached to himself, *first* the Law, *second* the Gospel. Should we not more frequently survey the constantly changing moral conditions of individual and common life in order to keep before us the content of righteousness, to renew moral sincerity, to tighten the moral fibre just where it tends to slacken ?

2. The unrest, bewilderment, longing after good, of the whole world and of all time, when conscious of itself, is expressed in the cry of the crowd around John. ‘What shall we do ?’ The burden of John’s reply is probably the comprehended best offered by the world’s helpers.

Let us compare it carefully with some of the replies being offered to our own generation.

3. Let us consider what, in effect, was the reply of Jesus, made in his acceptance of the baptism of John.

‘Others may tell us the way we should go, but Thou alone canst enable us to walk.’

**II. THE DESERT.**

‘Led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil’ (iv. 1–13).

‘If I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the Kingdom of God come upon you’ (x. 14–22). ‘I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven’ (x. 17).

**Notes.**

1. Still further delay, for the next step was to the desert. He must be alone for a time. The things of

God were to be for him the world of men ; his heart went out to the unshepherded multitude for whose need John's remedy was so manifestly insufficient. He saw a more excellent way, and believed it to be a possible way for one who was allied with God in sonly devotion and with man in brotherly loving-kindness. This is obvious from the ordered form taken by his meditations towards the end of those forty days of retreat. He saw his mission comprehensively, to be fulfilled in any one of three main spheres :

He might give himself to popular service and leadership.

He might enter the arena of polities and lead his nation—the ancient Chosen People—to freedom and the Golden Age, in name of Jahveh Himself.

He might devote himself to the Church, which sorely need a spiritual lead.

In each case the vision of a vocation presented itself on a large scale, and offered quick returns. For each scheme there was apparent Divine sanction. He was conscious within himself of power.

2. But there is far more in the parable than a study of spheres of service. The Gospels write of 'temptations.' It was a spiritual crisis, 'a dark night of the soul.' Jesus learned for himself something of the might and subtlety of the powers which are arrayed against God and man, even while he sought how best he might vanquish them. How else dared he venture forth to meet them ? He met them first in the desert, fearlessly, with God.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

The forms taken by evil are legion. Let us think of them as they met Jesus and as they meet ourselves :

- (a) In the innocent contact between our senses and the innocent material world, in the very search for our daily bread ;
- (b) In the cunning play around our powers of imagination, reason, and will—as in the glamour of big dreams or ambitions, the obsession generally of bigness rather than greatness, of appearance rather than reality, of quick returns rather than solid honest labour ;
- (c) In the realm of the spirit, at their craftiest ('I have sent a Christian to sleep' was the report which gained the highest praise from the lord of hell at a session of reports submitted to him by his agents ; so runs the legend).

Let us consider whether much of the ineffectiveness of individual Christian living, and of much of the social and religious activity within and without the Church, may not be due to our failure to recognise the power and magnitude and sheer skill which are arrayed against us. Jesus armed himself with knowledge.

' If we sleep, awake us mercilessly from our lethargy ;  
 Stir us to desperate faith ;  
 Drive us to the undertaking of impossible tasks for Thee.'

### III. THE VISIONS. THE FIRST VISION.

‘ If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread.’ ‘ It is written, “ Man shall not live by bread alone ” ’ (iv. 3, 4).

The people hung upon him, listening (xix. 48). A fame went out concerning Jesus through all the region round about, and he taught in their synagogues being glorified of all (iv. 14, 15). And amazement came upon all, and they spoke together one with another, saying, ‘ What is this word ? ’ . . . . He suffered not the demons to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ (iv. 40, 41). So much the more went abroad the report concerning him and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed. . . . But he withdrew himself into the desert and prayed (v. 15). The multitude sought after him, and came unto him and would have stayed him that he should not go from them. But he said unto them, ‘ I must preach the good news of the kingdom in the other cities also ’ (iv. 42, 43).

‘ I have compassion upon the multitudes. Pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His harvest ’ (x. 2).

#### Notes.

1. How Jesus dealt with the threefold vision of human service as it presented itself to him in the form of temptation we learn, *first* from the passage itself, and *second* from the record of his life. In the *first* case through the perfect oriental parable of his conflict with the lord of the world we learn of his stern repudiation of worldly methods; in the *second* we find him again and again exercising his powers within the spheres indicated, but according to a method of his own. Negatives in the wilderness, positives in his ministry.

2. The first suggestion for a man of the people who knew the people's needs and sympathised deeply with them would naturally be towards popular leadership. Win the People for God. Especially become a Bread-maker. Satisfy material need. Improve conditions. Bring health, comfort, pleasure, within reach of all. Infallibly they will make you their King (see John vi. 1-15), you may then do what you like with them. This is the implied suggestion,<sup>1</sup> and it must have appealed greatly to Jesus. He loved the fellowship of material giving and receiving, and the people were very needy. But he understood the corporate impulsiveness, the sudden emotions and intuitions of the crowd, and while he gave himself tenderly, mind and heart, word, look, and touch to the poor folk who followed and clung to him and loudly sang his praises, he resolutely declined to become their leader.

3. Several reasons are suggested by Luke for this reserve of Jesus.

(a) The irresponsibility of any crowd. What it may profess to-day in haste it may easily deny to-morrow at its leisure. Jesus' passion for God's harvest of humanity could not be satisfied with the quick returns of mere 'Mass Movements.' It expressed itself in a longing for labourers to gather it.

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<sup>1</sup> This may be questioned as not explicitly stated. But there is nothing explicit about this wilderness story. It is an oriental parable of the search of a gifted soul after its way of life. Such moments seem, by their very sacredness, to require the veil of parable.

The three visions manifestly hang together.

(b) 'Not by bread alone does man live.' 'Rice Christians' are easily produced anywhere. It was out of the very tenderness of his sympathy with the sufferings of poverty that he urged men to learn to live primarily and literally by their relationship with God. 'Be not anxious.' 'Your Father knoweth.'

(c) A third reason was personal to himself and applied to all the visions. He would not be a popular leader because his ambition lay in another direction. He believed in the literal power and good will of God and thought of himself as a medium only through whose actions God might be recognised. He would not, therefore, allow interest to concentrate in himself. 'Tell what great things *God* hath done for thee.' 'Has no one returned to give thanks to *God* save this stranger?' It was, again, his ideal of sonhood. 'If thou be son' was an unhappy note to strike from the point of view of the tempter.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Jesus refused to become a popular Bread-maker. Jesus did make bread. That is, he cared deeply for the physical and material good of the people.

Has the Church—the corporate body of those who are called to follow his lead—discovered yet the secret of the true negative and of the true positive?

2. The problem of 'the crowd' is endless. Let us consider some of its aspects as it is met in our own time: missionaries meet it in mass movements, social

and educational workers in big institutions where inmates or pupils must be dealt with *en masse*, campaigns are a modern form of it. It is, in essence, the problem of balancing the *extensive* with the *intensive*, the group with the individual, the emotional appeal with the appeal to reason and will.

‘ Give us thy own vision of the eternal values ;  
 Thy own resolute disregard of the second best ;  
 Thy own unflinching loyalty to duty and honour.’

#### IV. THE VISIONS. THE SECOND VISION.

He showed him all the kingdoms of the world (iv. 4-8).

‘ All these things the nations of the world seek after. . . . Seek ye His Kingdom, and these things shall be added to you ’ (xii. 29-32).

‘ Show me a penny. Whose is this image and superscription ? . . . Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s ’ (xx. 21-26).

‘ The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation. . . . The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you ’ (xvii. 20, 21).

#### Notes.

1. ‘ All the kingdoms of the world ! ’ It was the challenge of the Social Order into the inheritance of which he had come, and the response of his own consciousness of power to take his place in it. All his national loyalty would rise to the challenge, for Jerusalem is the world’s spiritual capital. All his missionary impulse would be drawn to it, for the universal Father must be concerned with the whole world of men.

There was more than glamour in the vision ;

there were possibilities in it. Jesus was not now a lad ; he was a thoughtful man who believed in God, and believed that his own source of inspiration and of power was of God.

2. The question was—How subdue the kingdoms of the world to the Kingdom of God ? There seemed one way, to yield something to the spirit of those kingdoms. But, could the Kingdom of God enter into any sort of alliance with the world even as he, a village carpenter, knew it ? With a bigoted nationalism exalted into a religion ? With a Social Order founded in greed of power and wealth, in the exploitation for gain of the weak by the strong ? <sup>1</sup> In materialism whether gross or refined ? In jealousy, self-glorification, exclusiveness ? In pride and social hypocrisies ?

3. Whatever his positive ideals for the carrying forward of his mission at that early moment, we are left in no doubt of this, that the Kingdom to which Jesus had pledged his devotion could not for one moment condescend to the methods of ‘ the kingdoms of the world.’ The world had always said, ‘ Lo here,’ ‘ Lo there’ will be Utopia. Jesus said simply, ‘ The Kingdom of Rightness is in your midst. God only shalt thou serve.’

Later, as we shall see, he added the positive teaching of the Kingdom of God, when he called upon

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<sup>1</sup> ‘ Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers ! ’ (xi. 40). ‘ Which devour widows’ houses ! ’ If the slave-driver and the profiteer were in power in Palestine, they were presumably in Rome.

men to realise it, to accept its freedom, to live up to its standards, to become its exponents, to fling their energies into its warfare.

But the principle of 'No compromise' was settled in the wilderness.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us recall some of the directions in which the ideals and methods suggested in this vision have been followed by the Church, and with what results? Also some of the directions in which we are still tempted to follow them.

'Thou knowest the danger of our wilful nature, and therefore strivest by greatest fears and greatest hopes, and all the wisest arts of love and bounty to draw us to Thyself and endow us with Thy Kingdom.'

**V. THE VISIONS. THE THIRD VISION.**

He took him to a pinnacle of the temple. . . . 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God' (iv. 9-12. Read the passage).

He entered into the temple and began to cast out them that sold, saying to them, 'It is written, "And My house shall be a house of prayer"; but ye have made it a den of robbers' (xix. 45-48).

'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy' (xii. 1-3). 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to walk in long robes, and love salutations in the market-places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and chief places at feasts; who devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater condemnation' (xx. 45-47).

Then came upon him the chief priests, and the scribes with the elders; and they spake saying unto him, 'Tell us by what authority doest thou these things? and who is he that gave thee this authority?' (xx. 1-9).

*Notes.*

‘Be a great Church leader. If needful, by one spectacular act, claim the Messiahship. Seize the institution for the purposes you have in view, and, incidentally, prove your vocation.’ Jesus’ reply was, ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’

1. We have a pretty complete picture of the Church as Jesus knew it, a Church respectable, conventional, spiritually moribund. The leaders exhibit those qualities most characteristic of periods of decay—casuistry, expediency, exclusiveness, officialism, ritualism, the elevation of means into ends, an insane jealousy of every sign of renewed life, that playing for safety which is the denial of faith (v. 33–39, and many other passages). It was obvious almost from the beginning that there must be mortal conflict between Jesus and those men.

2. They had a strong case against him. He was an uneducated, untrained, unordained, provincial person. He acted independently. His choice of associates and followers, his manner of life, his indifference to the ritual observances which were so dear to them, his authoritative tone, his influence with the people, all were intolerable to the official mind. Their great things were his little things; his great things never dawned upon their mental or spiritual horizon.

3. They bound themselves by laws and systems, separations and institutions. He lived and breathed and worshipped and worked out in the open. To him it was a glorious thing to be freer than the foxes which had holes and the birds which had nests. It

was a sonlier thing to live like lilies and ravens than to leap from a pinnacle of the temple. The Church loved to feel solid ground beneath her ; Jesus cultivated 'the bird quality.'

4. Sometimes Jesus took the initiative. He made protest in the court of the temple when the financial aspect of its maintenance obtruded itself upon the worshipper (xix. 45-48). He flung the gates of the city of God wide open ; to outsiders and to sinners alike he stretched the hand of fellowship (vii. 1-10, 36-50 ; xiii. 11-19 ; xv. 1 ; xviii. 9-14 ; xix. 1-19). All of which was anathema to Jerusalem.

Jesus remained loyal to Church and synagogue ; but the conflict begun in the wilderness continued to the end. It was the Church which compassed his death.<sup>1</sup>

### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us think whether there is any danger that the Church of our day might not welcome the presence of Jesus among us. In what directions would danger lurk ?

'Let us not be satisfied with the husks of a visible and external service.'

'O, set Thou right the bias of our hearts.'

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<sup>1</sup> According to Luke the accusations made against Jesus during his trial were based upon his words or action in the three spheres of the wilderness temptation: He was accused :

- (a) Of stirring up sedition *among the people* (xxiii. 5) ;
- (b) Of perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and claiming to be a King (xxiii. 2) ;
- (c) Of claiming to be the divinely promised Messiah, the Son of God (xxii. 66-71).

## PART 11

### THE MISSION OF JESUS

#### SECTION I.—Good News.

Good News for the Poor.

Release for the Captives (i. and ii.).

Vision for the Blind.

Liberty for the Crushed.

#### SECTION II.—The Era of Release : The Kingdom of God among Men.

The Kingdom of God which is.

The Kingdom of God on Earth.

The King.

The Adventure of the Kingdom.

The Citizenship of the Kingdom :

1. The Individual Citizenship.

2. The Corporate Body of Citizens.

The Servants of the Kingdom.



## SECTION I.—GOOD NEWS

### *Introductory Notes.*

1. From the wilderness to Nazareth, says Luke. From high visions of a people, a world, a Church at his feet in the name of God, to simplest intentions concerning a few needy folk in scattered Syrian hamlets ! It was thus that Jesus saw himself *in the concerns of his Father !* It was thus that he would inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth !

In the wilderness, in secret, largely by means of a series of denials, he reached certain fundamental decisions ; at Nazareth, publicly, positively, and in detail, he proclaimed those decisions. The first natural impression as we compare the two passages is of the sheer ridiculous inadequacy of his means as he proclaimed them to his ends as he knew them. The second impression, with the history of his influence upon the world, still silently leavening its mind and its heart, *a live thing among us*, is of the prophetic constructive wisdom of his choice when he said to Nazareth, ‘This day is this scripture fulfilled.’ I am sent to inaugurate the Kingdom of God, and this is the way of it.

2. There is another introductory thought. In Luke’s elucidation of the mind of Jesus we find the recurring note of a stern summons to the denial of the spirit of Self. In this connection also it was wise to

place the Nazareth incident in the beginning of the book. For we are here assured at once and finally that not denial but fulfilment is the fundamental Christian ideal. Humanity, the whole of humanity, is intended for fulfilment. This is Jesus' 'good news'; any other version of his message is manifestly a contradiction of it. Where comfort is required therefore, comfort must be brought; where limitations and hamperings are most deeply felt, there must be complete enfranchisement; vision must be offered to all who grope in darkness; the spring of life must reach and revive those who have been borne down by earth's burdens of sin, suffering, and sorrow.

'Go and do it,' said Jesus to his missionaries nineteen hundred years ago. It is not done yet. We are still holding conferences to discuss how it is to be done.

### I. GOOD NEWS FOR THE POOR.

'"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"' (xii. 16-20). 'He was clothed in purple and fine linen, living in mirth and splendour [R.V. margin] every day . . . and a certain beggar was laid at his gate . . .' (xvi. 19-31). 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God!' (xviii. 24). 'Man, who made me a divider and a judge over you?' (xii. 13-15).

'Ye tithe mint and every herb, and pass over judgment and the love of God. . . . Ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers' (xi. 42-46).

'Blessed are ye poor.' 'Blessed are ye that hunger' (vi. 20, 21).

‘ What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ? ’ . . . ‘ One thing thou lackest yet ; sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come, follow me ’ (xviii. 18–23). ‘ Take heed and keep yourselves from covetousness [lust for more simply to have more] ; for not in a man’s abundance consisteth his life ’ (xii. 15). ‘ Sell all that ye have and give alms ; make yourselves purses that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not ; where no thief draweth near, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also ’ (xii. 22–34).

‘ Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor wallet, nor bread, nor money, neither have two coats ’ (ix. 2, 3 ; x. 3, 4). ‘ Lacked ye anything ? ’ ‘ Nothing ’ (xxii. 35).

‘ Be not anxious ’ (xii. 22–31).

‘ This day is salvation come to this house ’ (ix. 1–10). ‘ There is no man who has left home, or wife, or parents, or brethren, or children, for the Kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life ’ (xviii. 29). ‘ Yours is the Kingdom of God ’ (vi. 20). It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (xii. 32).

### Notes.

1. The problems of wealth and poverty, especially in the aspect of their bearing upon character, are almost an obsession with Luke. Large sections of the book are occupied with them. They are seen more simply than we see them, but the passages are not the less instructive for that.

There are three parables of wealth, horrid pictures of selfish materialism. The ‘ rich fool ’ (xii. 16–20) saw in the wide universe only himself and his possible excellent investments. He took no account of the commonest facts of life. He did not even make a will.

Of course he ignored God. Dives added to this astounding folly a haughty indifference to misery at his door (xvi. 19-31). The third story is less simple. The hero (xvi. 1-13), steward to a rich man, is dismissed for dishonesty. He is a clever scoundrel, and while under notice ensures his future comfort, still at his master's expense. His master praises the man's foresight, his one-idea-ed devotion to his one end, himself. No divided mastership for him! The first two are individualists of the naïve type, they frankly fail to see any one but themselves. The individualism of the third is expert. He is the perfect example of the profiteer, the member of the 'Acquisitive Society' which thrives 'by private ownership divorced from work.'<sup>1</sup>

Since Jesus saw characters of this type in blackest colours, we are not surprised that he met as he did two men who came to him with wealth problems (xii. 13-15; xviii. 18-27). In both cases, though with tenderness in the second, there is an unwonted aloofness in his manner. 'Who made me a divider?' 'Sell all. Come. Follow me.' Nor is it strange that he spoke scathing words to Church and national leaders who in their efforts to reconcile workless acquisitiveness with piety had fallen into a hateful hypocrisy. A Society founded in greed, luxury, rotten finance, individualism, exploitation of the labour of other men, must be hateful to God. The instinct of Zaccheus was true. If the Master was to be his guest, he must not only be straight, more than

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<sup>1</sup> *The Acquisitive Society.* R. H. Tawney.

straight, publicly straight, his heart and his coffers must be opened wide, 'The half of my goods I give to the poor.'

2. 'Blessed are ye poor.' It is significant of the conviction of Luke on this subject that he not only brings Jesus from Matthew's mountain-top to speak the Beatitudes on a plain, but removes from the Beatitudes themselves all qualifying words, so bringing them from spiritual heights to reveal bluntly their bearing upon the common levels of life.<sup>1</sup> We cannot shelter behind a transcendental conception of poverty which has no specific bearing upon our bank account or other form of wealth. That Jesus, and Luke searching his mind, had definite views concerning poverty the whole Gospel goes to show. Who are the Company of the Blessed Poor ?

- (a) The poor in material goods, who have had little chance in this life, are never far from his sympathy.
- (b) Some are doubtless the 'blessed' rich to whom their wealth is simply the means of a responsible and effective stewardship. Their pound becomes five, even ten (xix. 11-28) with immeasurable possibilities beyond.
- (c) Others hear the stern and literal 'sell all,' whether for their own soul's sake (it was not spoken to Zaccheus) or for the sake of the contribution which such offering and such

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<sup>1</sup> 'His ideal was one that is ever springing up anew and ever withering under the wind of hatred and denial—the ideal of bringing the Gospel actually and literally into daily life, whether public or private. . . . An inconvenient person.' (?)

poverty may make towards the cause of the Kingdom of God.

(d) Jesus especially coveted those who have discovered the secret of the gay company of the birds and flowers. They ask 'bread for the coming day,' no more. They would not exchange a Sabbath morning breakfast sauntering through the cornfields for any sumptuous meal in Dives' palace (vi. 1-8). They have a divine Provider and they know it. 'Lacked ye anything?' 'Nothing.'

(e) There are others, also coveted by Jesus, whose divine discontent nothing less than the first things will satisfy. They have closely studied comparative values, and are always of the poor. Mary of Bethany leads their company.

3. It seems almost unnecessary to inquire concerning the Good News to be proclaimed to such poor as these. There are radiant qualities in the poverty itself, care-free-ness, exhilaration, expectation, joyous-ness. These poor live in a world where 'things happen.' They 'have nothing and possess all things.' Therefore, to quote Paul's other poverty paradox, 'they make many rich.' They are at leisure from themselves. Their queen is 'a certain poor widow who cast into the treasury two mites' (one farthing) (xxi. 1-3). According to the currency of the Kingdom of God this was *the* contribution that day; it has multiplied itself at a rate of interest unknown to any other kingdom. It multiplies itself still in every part of this sordid world. Never was investment so

unconsciously made, never investment so gloriously successful. This is the meaning of the freedom of the Kingdom of God.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Jesus was not in our sense a Social Reformer : he was an Idealist. Let us question—

(1) How his ideals concerning (a) comparative values, and (b) method of life, would translate into practicable terms in any society we know.

(2) Whether they would help to solve the world's social problem (*e.g.* the evils of our own industrial system).

(3) Whether, if unanimously accepted by every man and woman who bears his name, as from January 1, 1924, the world's social conditions would be materially affected ?

‘Grant eyes to see, ears to hear, a will to obey, a heart to love ; then declare what Thou wilt, command what Thou wilt, demand what Thou wilt.’

## II. RELEASE FOR THE CAPTIVES. I.

‘I am sent to proclaim release to the captives’ (iv. 18).

‘The disciples of John fast often . . . also the disciples of the Pharisees, but thine eat and drink’ (v. 33-41). ‘He marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner’ . . . ‘Now do ye Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter’ . . . ‘Ye tithe mint and rue and every herb’ (xi. 37-44). This he said, making all meats clean.<sup>1</sup>

The ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation

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<sup>1</sup> ‘A noble, a liberative utterance.’—Montefiore.

because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the multitude, 'There are six days in which man ought to work, in these therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the Sabbath.' . . . 'Should not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years to have been loosed on the Sabbath?' (xiii. 10-17). 'The Son of man is lord of the Sabbath' (vi. 9-15. Also vi. 1-10; xiv. 1-5).

A man who had a spirit of an unclean demon (iv. 32-35). 'Legion,' for many demons were entered into him (viii. 26-39). 'With authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they obey him' (iv. 33-37).

'Maiden, arise' (viii. 54). 'Stretch forth thy hand' (vi. 11). 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thy house' (v. 24). 'Satan hath desired to have thee that he might sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not' (xxii. 31).

'It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling shall come, but woe unto him through whom they come' (xvii. 1). 'Woe unto you. . . . Ye bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne.' 'Release, and ye shall be released' (xii. 37-38).

#### Notes.

This is the good news for the caged creatures of the world. Jesus met many captives during his short life, which simply means that he met men and women as they are; captives of the Social Order, of public opinion, tradition, prejudice; captives of law—of the must and must not, the do and do not (*e.g.* of the commandment of rest, most difficult of all to obey aright, most easy to convert into a moral tyranny); captives of the forces of evil, mainly typified by demoniacal possession; captives of the innocent details, the toil and stress, of daily life; captives of sheer inability; captivities self-imposed,

mutually imposed, or imposed by powers and forces from without. There was no question at all in the mind of Jesus as to the *fact* of human bondage. Some hugged their chains ; some were serenely unconscious of them ; some chafed helplessly under them ; few were free.

1. The first, and the last, impression left upon the mind by a study of Jesus' dealing with this condition is, that it in no sense dismayed him. The condition, he insisted, is abnormal and remediable.

He was himself inspired by the very spirit of freedom. Even in little provincial Palestine he created an atmosphere as of great spaces and the free air of heaven.<sup>1</sup> He terrified the 'safe men' of the nation ; he alarmed conservative Churchmen ; the timid 'went away sorrowful.' But Levi, sitting at the place of toll, 'forsook all and rose up and followed him' (v. 27, 28). Zaccheus, upon a simple request for a night's lodging, emerged from the captivity of his strong-room, a free soul. Men and women took the open road for sheer joy of journeying with so free a leader into so free a life, and found it an open road for mind and spirit no less than for body.

2. Since the only real bondage is the bondage of the soul, he called upon men to free themselves. The

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<sup>1</sup> 'One of the most astonishing things that have yet fallen under our observation is the exceedingly small portion of the earth from which sprang the now flourishing plant of Christianity. . . . The places made celebrated by the presence of Christ are nearly all right here in full view, and within cannon-shot of Capernaum. . . . It is as much as I can do to comprehend this stupefying fact.'—Mark Twain in the *New Pilgrim's Progress*.

ancient belief in repressive, coercive, punitive measures for the liberation of goodness<sup>1</sup> he simply set aside. Instead, he asked for the exercise of the power of will, now in one comprehensive act, again through a patient, progressive, self-liberative process, 'in your patience ye shall win your souls.' Free manhood is your ultimate heritage, *win it*. Jesus knew indeed—he was no easy optimist—how weak a man's will may be, but he is ready for that also; 'I have prayed for thee,' he said to Peter, and set himself to restore his self-respect as a free man, even before he was aware of the danger of losing it.

3. Jesus believed in a personal spirit of evil, lord of legions of malignant demons, in revolt against God, especially inimical to man. It is the simplest explanation of certain phenomena—of waves of hatred and vice which at intervals sweep over the world, of certain insidious forms of temptation, of much secret experience within the soul of every man. The most important notes in the 'apocalyptic' passages of the Gospel are the warnings concerning the designs of this power of evil upon the world, and the assurance of the ultimate victory of God and righteousness (xxi.). 'When ye see these things know that the Kingdom of God is near.' Meantime, 'Watch.'

4. The words of Jesus which bear upon Social problems are few but enlightening. The sense of human responsibility is always with him. The Woes addressed to those responsible for the civilisation of his own day leave us in no doubt as to his mind

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<sup>1</sup> A paradoxical doctrine of discipline not even yet exploded.

concerning a system organised for the privileged few. 'Woe to you . . . who bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne'; 'Woe unto him through whom causes of stumbling come.' The first includes obviously all who profit directly or indirectly, by the over-burdening, under-payment, exploitation in any form, of any brother man. The second goes deeper; it includes every careless word spoken or meaning silence which might do harm, every temptation carelessly left in the way of the weak, every fall from the standard of righteousness, which might be taken as an example. It is well to remember that the conditions of a free manhood for ourselves are—'Release, and ye shall be released.'

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. Let us consider the problem of the criminal, the captive of the baser self, in the light of Jesus' message of release from captivity (see xi. 14, 15).
2. Let us consider in the presence of God, the possibilities in ourselves of 'causing others to stumble,' and note how these not only make captive those who fall, but those who cause the fall.

'We pray thee for new freedom of spirit,  
New zeal in thy service, new forgetfulness of ourselves ;  
New power to forsake the lower path,  
And to climb ever upward towards the heights.'

## II. RELEASE FOR THE CAPTIVES. II. AN ILLUSTRATION.

‘Sent to proclaim liberty to the captives’ (iv. 18).

*Notes.*

It is an old commonplace<sup>1</sup> that Luke’s is the Gospel of the emancipation of woman. There was some excuse for it. Luke had a physician’s sympathy with the burden-bearing woman. He gives many portraits of women of Jesus’ circle, and offers frequent glimpses of the mutual understanding between Jesus and them; friendship on his part, loving reverence on theirs. But the interest of the record lies, not in their receiving the full freedom of the City of God, but in the fact that their freedom is taken for granted. It requires, and receives, no comment.<sup>2</sup> Jesus seems to liberate instinctively; in telling the story Luke falls in with the Master’s manner. Three main principles may, however, be traced through the general sense of the book: (1) that the sexes are equal; (2) that there is an essential difference of character and vocation; and (3) that woman has a distinct character and vocation of her own.

1. The inequalities which obtain in human Society did not exist for Jesus. The oriental idea of a superior

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<sup>1</sup> A natural but a partial commonplace. The emancipation proclaimed by Jesus was the emancipation of humanity—man with woman, woman with man.

<sup>2</sup> Whatever the influence of Paul’s mind upon that of his friend, it is clear that the alarm of the great missionary lest women should overstep certain well-marked bounds in Church and Society found no place in Luke’s thinking.

and an inferior sex had therefore no place in his mind. Who do the will of God are his mother and his brethren; he needs both and needs them equally. The contribution of each to the realisation of the Kingdom of God cannot be reckoned as greater or less. The parables of such contribution are in pairs, a man's and a woman's parable (xiii. 18-21; xv. 3-10).<sup>1</sup> He certainly used towards women rather markedly his favourite method of appreciation, but it was with the double purpose of encouraging their timid advance and of rebuking the tendency to belittle them (vii. 36-50; viii. 43-48; x. 42; xxi. 3, 4).<sup>2</sup> There is no singling out of women, there is simply a gentle aid to self-respect where self-respect was made difficult. The inference is that according to the law and purpose and need of the Kingdom of God, woman must take her place for all time alongside of her comrade man.<sup>3</sup>

2. Equality does not involve identity any more than unity involves uniformity. We are not left in uncertainty of the mind—should we say instinct?—of Jesus with regard to differences of character and function between man and woman, as fellow-citizens of the Kingdom of God, fulfilling one social task. We must not bring undue pressure to bear upon the companion parables, but we do ask, why two of each? A man loses a sheep, a woman a coin from her necklace.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Matt. xxv. 1-30.

<sup>2</sup> See also Matt. xv. 21-28; xxvi. 6-13.

<sup>3</sup> She is not ordained to the apostolate, the methods of Jesus are not revolutionary; but the first apostles of the new Order were women (xxiii. 49-xxiv. 11).

The simplest inference is that the search after the lost is equally the task of man and woman. But in the more interior parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, a natural functional differentiation is suggested. The man plants his seed out in the open and the fruit of his action is there for the whole world to see and utilise. The woman hides her leaven in her meal till the whole is leavened. The first suggestion is that the Kingdom of God is realised in both these ways, the open and the hidden ; the second surely is that they are the ways of man and woman respectively.<sup>1</sup> It is the leaven parable which grips us, it is so divinely in-seeing, the perfect illustration of the natural method of the great woman. Did these pairs of parables happen ? Or were they placed together of intention ? No theories of sex vocation were in demand in the year A.D. 30 or in the year A.D. 70. But the parables are not less significant of the mental attitude of Jesus that they may have been spoken simply out of the wealth of his powers of illustration, in his efforts to initiate his friends, men and women, into the mysteries of the Society into which he had called them.

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<sup>1</sup> In Matthew's companion parables (xxv. 1-30), parables of responsibility, we have another illustration. In the second, a *day* parable, a business task is set to men, requiring the highest business qualities, keenness, foresight, promptitude, steady nerve, absolute trustworthiness. In the second, a *night* parable, the moral demand is the same, the demand upon the spirit is different ; the bridal maidens out upon their midnight watch, require unresting silent watchfulness. Is it stretching the parables to suggest that Jesus carried the natural into the spiritual ; that man is the maker doing constructive work, woman the torch-bearer doing illuminative work in the Kingdom of God ?

3. Considering, then, her torch and her leaven we gather that woman is especially concerned with the more hidden and silent tasks—the setting of standards social and moral, the making of manners and the forming of character, not only as mother with child, but as woman with woman and woman with man. That the powers of illumination and permeation are her ultimate instrument for good or evil, used by every woman in and beyond Christendom in every contact she makes, we know ; that in Jesus' conception they are an immeasurable trust, an immeasurable responsibility (see the light and salt parables) there can be no manner of doubt.<sup>1</sup>

She hid her leaven in her meal 'till it was all leavened' ; secretly, subtly, surely, it worked to its end.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'There is an outer bloom, very frail ; an inner commonplace supporting texture ; and an inmost core, strong, tenacious, unconquerable. . . . When a woman lets go this ideal of bloom, core and strength and tenacity go out from her.' —Dr. Taylor in *The Nature of Woman*.

<sup>2</sup> Men and women are now formally taking their places side by side in the service of Church and State. They speak, lead, govern together. It was inevitable and it is right. But simply because she cannot help herself unless her very nature changes—which would be the last tragedy of the world—the public service of women will only emphasise their subtle quality of influence, so intimate, often so unconsciously exercised ; so forceful that some day it may well prove the making or the marring of the future of the world.

Women are pressing forward towards full ecclesiastical suffrage. It is a simple fact that there is no word in the Gospels which would forbid it. Although Jesus never forced the pace, he silently prepared the way for the fullest liberation of women to serve. But it should not be forgotten that formal equal status with men is a minor concern. Throughout the history of the Church, especially during periods when need

*For Thought and Prayer.*

The method chosen by Jesus for the emancipation of the human race has worked very slowly. Let us consider whether there are occasions when the revolutionary method is the true method, to be used even by those who most emphatically accept the leadership of Jesus. Can we recall any such occasions recorded in history? Can we think of any such occasions (they will be urgent, we may be sure) at the present moment, or which may arise in the near future?

‘With heart responsive and enfranchised eyes, we thank Thee, Lord.’

‘Perfect the work Thou hast begun, and make even our passions servants of Thy grace.’

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was great, women who realised their freedom, took their cue from their Master and made their contribution *without making any claim at all*. Bridgid of Ireland, Hilda of England, Liobgitha of Germany, Margaret of Scotland, Bridget of Sweden, Elizabeth of Hungary, the Catherines of Italy, Teresa of Spain, and many others less known, made good their calling through leadership, organisation, governance, reform; nor was their service in any degree hampered by mere ecclesiastical limitation. Hilda was no bishop, but five, so far as we know excellent, bishops were of her training. Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena were not popes, but they were the spiritual leaders whom popes and cardinals were constrained to reckon with and to obey. Bridget’s first interview with the Pope is good to read of; she prostrated herself humbly before the Vicar of Christ, then rose and spoke her mind about the feebleness and sin of the Representative of the Church. Equally satisfying from the woman’s point of view, is the Pope’s midnight visit to Catherine (when both were passing through Genoa). Teresa did not occupy a pulpit, but none of her official contemporaries wielded spiritual weapons more powerful than hers. The infallible proof of a commission lies in the interior urge towards its fulfilment, and the true Church infallibly recognises the *imprimatur* of her Lord.

### III. VISION FOR THE BLIND.

‘Sent to proclaim the recovering of sight to the blind’ (iv. 18).

‘When ye see a cloud arising in the west, straightway ye say, “There cometh a shower,” and so it comes to pass. . . . Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven, how is it that ye know not how to interpret the time ? And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right ?’ (xii. 54–56). Others tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven. . . . ‘This is an evil generation ; it seeketh after a sign’ (xi. 16–35, whole passage).

He saw the city and wept over it saying, ‘If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hidden from thine eyes’ (xix. 41, 42). ‘Whoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he thinketh he hath’ (viii. 18).

‘Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables’ (xi. 34–36). ‘Blessed are your eyes which see the things that you see ; for I say unto you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them’ (x. 23, 24).

‘No man when he has lighted a candle putteth it in a cellar, neither under a bushel, but on the stand, that they who enter in may see the light’ (xi. 33. Also viii. 46).

‘The lamp of thy body is thine eye ; when thine eye is single thy whole body is full of light ; but when it is evil thy whole body also is full of darkness. If, therefore, thy whole body is full of light, it shall be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining shall give thee light’ (x. 34–36).

It is, of course, to the seeing eye of mind and soul that Jesus refers. In his judgment the vast majority of the men and women around him were blind, often willingly and culpably blind. Some haughtily denied the charge ; others thought they already saw all that was to be seen ; others again, refused to see what they

did not wish to see, quibbled, and demanded of Jesus some special sign of his prophetic authority. A few, recognising in him a true Seer, came saying, 'Master, that we may receive sight.'

1. Most frequently the reference is to Social vision. The leaders of national opinion who, notwithstanding their disdain, haunted him everywhere, he roundly accused of a wilful and cowardly blindness to 'the signs of the time.' He summoned them to come to grips with facts. He reminded them of the old Hope of a Social Order founded in a certain spirit, dreamed of by the patriots of the past, still, he maintained, possible of achievement. But the political, and especially the *laissez faire* type of mind has no affinity with the prophetic and constructive; with this audience Jesus completely failed. The most solemn words he ever spoke were those in which he asserted the ultimate responsibility for the realisation of truth, the most poignant were those of his lament over the capital, 'Oh, that thou hadst known the things which belonged to peace!' (xix. 41, 42).

The exposition given by Jesus of his conception of a Social Order, to be realised as the Kingdom of God on earth, belongs to the next section. Here we are concerned with the reception of it. The Scribes and Pharisees would have none of it; they were terrified of it. But some of those who met him desired to see; they became his disciples. These were never wilfully blind; they misunderstood; they blundered; but they did, as in a glass darkly, catch glimpses of his Social Hope. Jesus encouraged them at every point. He took for granted that they did see. He con-

stantly pictured 'the Kingdom' to them, now in one aspect, now in another. He patiently corrected their mistakes. In the end, so amazing was his trust in an illumined mind and spirit, he left that handful of men and women to evolve his Order out of a world with which apparently it had almost nothing in common.

Ordinary folk they were, of little education and no knowledge of the world ; but he found and developed in them an intuitive response to a great thought, capability of venturing out, beyond their normal mental and moral environment, and of making heroic experiments in the interests of the Kingdom of which he dreamt. These were the real recoverers of sight, a continual refreshment to his spirit.

2. Life was a broken thing to many of those who crowded around Jesus, and his manner of dealing with the 'dark mysteries' of human experience offers another illustration of his ways with the blind.

He shirked no fact and denied no difficulty. He did not make light of suffering, nor did he preach false platitudes about the will of God. But he did for himself turn to God. He started from his early sense of Fatherhood and saw the lilies touched to beauty, the sparrows remembered, the hairs of the head numbered, in that light. In that light he accepted limited knowledge ; in that light he accepted the dark mystery of his own later life. **GOD-IS-FATHER.** Thus he attained the splendid optimism which is founded not in limited reason but in unlimited trust, a trust daily tested and daily reinforced. This is the fact the blind have got to see, they will see

dimly at first, but they will see more and more clearly as they use their vision ; whatever the Father is responsible for is rightful and is loveful. It was this conviction which enabled Jesus to move among broken lives, accepting his share in the common burden, and carrying healing for body, mind, and spirit, in itself a solution of the problem, since it is a reminder that wholeness and rightness are the Divine intention.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus certainly held peculiar views ; the measures and standards of his ' Kingdom of God ' are not ours. Success and failure he almost reversed. Suffering, in itself, is evil ; but suffering, whether borne involuntarily, if borne well, or borne voluntarily in a cause worthy of its cost, or that vicarious suffering which loving souls endure for love's sake, he shows to be an experience so fruitful that the sufferer would hardly have it away. This is a simple and knowledgeable fact. Lastly, for those who can receive it, Jesus offers another suggestion ; he helps us to readjust the balance of life. If he is right, life is ahead of us.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We are less blind, or more honest, than we were. Problems of human making are not problems, they are results ; they are a job crying to be done. It is a fair question whether *all* our problems are not due, *first*, to the wicked will or lack of will of wicked men, and *second*, to the wicked failure of good men to produce a fearless and effective public opinion. Illumination is a slow process until men wish to see ! But at length does come the 'never again' mind.

'Prevention is better than cure.' Child welfare might well have been suggested by the actions and words of Jesus as easily as the year A.D. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Yet we talk as pagans never talk of our seventy years as 'our life,' and we celebrate the end with hideous pageantry. In practice we are materialists pure and simple.

I am come to proclaim recovering of sight to the blind. He that hath eyes to see let him see.

‘Great is thine honour, though thou walk in night,  
For fringes of thy darkness feel the light.’<sup>1</sup>

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Obviously we need vision far beyond our normal seeing power. Let us think over such measures for the cure of our moral and social blindness as are suggested by Jesus’ own fulfilment of his own mission.

‘Pity, O gracious Lord, the frailties of Thy servants, and suffer not our blindness to lead us to ruin.’

**IV. LIBERTY FOR THE CRUSHED.**

‘Thou art loosed from thy infirmity’ (xiii. 12). ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee; Arise, take up thy bed and go to thy house’ (v. 17–36. Also vii. 36–50). She came trembling and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people for what cause she touched him, and how she was healed immediately. . . . ‘Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace’ (viii. 43–48).

‘Go and tell John the things ye have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news preached to them’ (vii. 20–23).

‘They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance’ (v. 31. Also xv.).

‘Sent . . . to proclaim liberty to the crushed’ (iv. 18).

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence Housman.

*Notes.*

There was evidently one main principle in the mind of Jesus as he moved about among the people, ill and well, rich and poor. All human lives are equally precious. The simple deduction is, that there must be an equal chance in life for all, the weak, so long as there are weak, with the strong ; and, that the chance must include a perfect all-round equipment, body, soul, and spirit making the man. 'Thy sins are forgiven thee' and 'Arise, take up thy bed and go to thy house' are only two aspects of one offer of wholeness. The woman who was healed by the touch of Jesus' garment was not really healed until her spirit had been quieted and reassured by his gentle word of peace. If we accept his mind we must believe that in any Christian Society all-round wholeness should be the normal condition.

Here we have his Gospel for those whom an evil civilisation has left behind. Until there are no 'crushed' these are his special care ; the sick are they who need a physician. The sick in soul are they who need him most. We shall concentrate upon this aspect of Jesus' message for the crushed.

1. Jesus did not discuss problems of heredity, temperament, environment ; he knew nothing about 'false claims' or 'complexes' ; but he made one fact quite clear : apart from sin, some one's sin, some community's sin, there would be no world's burden at all.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> But Jesus sternly denied the old doctrine that all suffering is retributive. 'Think ye that they were offenders above all . . . ?' (xiii. 1-8).

He was not greatly concerned with acts of sin ; he was concerned with the mood which led to the act. Hence his distinction between one sinner and another. Simon the Pharisee was somehow a deeper sinner than the Magdalen. There was a fundamental difference between the betrayer who betrayed his friend with a kiss and the denier who denied his friend not once but thrice, although an ordinary observer might not have known it. It is a question whether the slavish son of the parable was not a worse sinner against sonhood than the young scamp who lightly threw his sonhood away. ‘The heart is the workroom of sin.’

He was also greatly concerned with the ‘left undone.’ The servant who made no use of his master’s pound (xix. 11–28) ; the fig-tree sucking up the juices of the earth, spreading itself in the sunshine year after year, and producing no fruit (xiii. 6–8)<sup>1</sup> ; the failure of Jerusalem to realise the day of her visitation : these are among his illustrations of sin. Human responsibility is an attribute of humanity ; it cannot be repudiated.

Finally he summarised all sin as the refusal to be sons of God. The one crushing burden of the world is the burden of its bondage to that which is not God. To arise and go to our Father is the first step to emancipation.

2. The practical psychology of Jesus was a perfect guide to his practical treatment of the crushed.

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<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to discover how many years the tender-hearted critics of this parable would permit their fruitless and greedy fig-tree in their vineyard.

He did not 'rake in the mud of the sub-conscious'; he spoke a word of forgiveness.

With forgiveness came full reinstatement.<sup>1</sup>

The privileges and delights, the possibilities and responsibilities, of the sons of God were made familiar.

Conscience became sensitive and effective.

The will was strengthened.

Weak men and women became fit citizens and ambassadors of the Kingdom of the Father.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. Let us compare more fully Jesus' conception of sin with conceptions of sin still common among us.

2. Let us compare more fully Jesus' ways towards a sinner with our ways—as individuals, and in Church and State—with a sinner.

'Thou hast broken our bonds, we will offer to Thee the sacrifice of praise. Thou hast put joy into our hearts, we will put our trust in Thee.'

'Give us a cheerful spirit wherein to work Thy wonders.'

<sup>1</sup> 'A sin is remembered against them [in the mission] so much longer than all their efforts to rise above it; they do not get a chance,' wrote a troubled missionary. We are not good at reinstatement.

'"Thou bringest no offerings," said Michael,

"Naught save sin."

And the blackbird sung, "She is sorry, sorry, sorry,  
Let her in! Let her in!"'

## SECTION II.—THE ERA OF RELEASE; THE KINGDOM OF GOD AMONG MEN

### *Introductory Note.*

The fifth clause of the Nazareth Proclamation arrests attention. Luke's summary of the passage read by Jesus stops short with it; it seems indeed to gather to itself in one comprehensive phrase the plan of his mission as Jesus saw it. It suggests the unity within the diversity. In detail the manifold burden of men was to be lightened, for the Heart of Pity was at work among us; but within each act, informing it with a further and a deeper meaning, lay hidden one Divine Secret, awaiting our discovery.

Dr. Moffatt translates the phrase, 'the Lord's year of favour,' Dr. Weymouth, 'the year of acceptance with the Lord.' We shall venture, with the sanction of the context of the whole book, upon a free rendering: 'the Era of Release,' release not now *from* certain evils, but release *to* something else. Jesus saw no hope at all in an empty swept and garnished house.

With this Era of Release we associate that other phrase in which all the sureness and constructiveness, all the statesmanship of the mind and intention of Jesus, constantly expresses itself: 'the Kingdom of God.'

The Era of Release is the Kingdom of God, realised among us. The Kingdom of God is, if we only knew it, our Era of Release.

## I. THE KINGDOM OF GOD WHICH IS.

‘Unto what shall I liken the Kingdom of God ? And whereunto shall I liken it ? It is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and cast into his own garden ; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the heaven lodged in the branches thereof.’ And again he said, ‘Whereunto shall I liken the Kingdom of God ? It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened ’ (xiii. 16–21).

‘The mysteries of the Kingdom of God ’ (viii. 4–18).

‘The Kingdom of God is among you ’ (xvii. 20, 21).

*Notes.*

There has been one main difficulty, with others arising out of it, in elucidating the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. He visualised it, as it were, upon more than one plane, and the problem is how rightly to refer his words. There are references (a) to a Kingdom of God, unconditioned as all things are conditioned among us, a universal, serene, God-governed realm, and (b) to a Kingdom of God, limited, so to speak, to apply to the limited conditions of our particular world. There is a Kingdom of God which is ; there is a Kingdom of God which will come on earth.

1. To Jesus the Kingdom of God which is was a realist’s fact, not an idealist’s dream. In a true sense it was the only fact, since every other fact must be inseparably bound up with it ; this world must be a fragment of it ; ourselves must be subjects of it. When he spoke of it he found countless similitudes therefor, the Kingdom of God is like all sorts of humanly knowledgeable things simply because those things are a part of its action.

2. The Kingdom of God cannot be discerned through history alone, nor through prophecy alone, for it is neither past nor future. It is eternally, universally, constantly present. It is 'God's everlasting now.'

3. It is the realm of serene, harmonious, pervasive, living life. Seed, growth, fruition, are its truest symbols. 'As the fig-tree and all the trees shoot forth their leaves showing that summer is near,' so will the activities of the Kingdom of God reveal themselves to those who have eyes to see. The Kingdom of God is not, therefore, an organisation, it is an organism ; it is not still, it is an eternal progression ; it is never ancient, it is ever youthful and vigorous.

4. Something of inevitableness is suggested. With His subjects or without them the purposes of the King are always achieved. But Jesus never tired of assuring his hearers that there is no inexorableness within the Kingdom. Loyalty and obedience are offered not to Lawgiver but to Lover, and Love uses no force except the force of Love. Citizens are, literally, 'sons and daughters of the Most High' (vi. 35).

5. The Kingdom of God is on earth. Of course it is, but it is not realised on earth.<sup>1</sup> The presence of

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<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless we have always been, so to speak, subconsciously conscious of it, sometimes only as a dim tradition of the past, sometimes as a hope of the future. There have been many noble guesses at it. China saw it as a world of perfectly adjusted relationship ; India as a universe of reposeful evolutionary progress ; Greece as an ideal democracy ; Israel as a Kingdom of the Heavens under the unmediated rule of God.

hostile forces, noisy and aggressive, secret and pervasive, has obscured, not the Kingdom indeed, but man's consciousness of it ; the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are dazzling and alluring. But to Jesus God's Kingdom was the real Kingdom ; he lived in the faith of it, toiled for the love of it, died for the cause of it.

Cease to say, 'Lo, here !' or 'Lo, there is the Kingdom !' 'The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you.' The follower of Jesus is a thorough-going optimist, not because his eyes are closed to facts, but because they are open. *Dominus regnabit.*

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us remind ourselves of some of the signs of the Kingdom of God which is in the midst of us : *e.g.* in the world of Nature, its beauty, harmony, proportion, order ; or in the world of human nature, its response to these, its feeling after love and truth and righteousness, its mysterious sense of kinship with the Divine. Let us meditate upon the God of Jesus, King and Father, Heart of purity, unity, and love.

'In all things attune our hearts to the holiness and harmony of Thy Kingdom.'

'Happy are they, O glorious Lord, who everywhere adore Thy presence ; happy who live on earth as in the sight of the King of Heaven, and every moment say in their hearts, Our God is here !'

## II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH.

‘Behold the fig-tree and all the trees, when they shoot forth ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh’ (from the apocalyptic passage, xxi. 29-31. Also x. 9-11).

‘The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, “Lo, here!” or “Lo, there!” for lo, the Kingdom of God is in your midst’ (xvii. 20, 21).

### *Notes.*

Obviously the Kingdom of God is unrealised on earth. It proved difficult for Jesus to introduce to the men and women around him the heavenly Order which was so visible to himself. The minds of the majority of his hearers, even the more sympathetic, were possessed by ideas which conflicted fundamentally with his. To use his own simile, the ground was rutted, or shallow, or pre-occupied, and was therefore inhospitable to ‘the seed of the Kingdom’ (viii. 4-16). Yet it is through the difficulties he met and his efforts to meet them, that the spaciousness of his own vision of a Society which should represent the Kingdom of God on earth found expression.

1. He began at home. He founded generally upon the national hopes which were at their highest true glimpses and prophecies, and he declared their unrealised reality. He made constant use of similitudes. ‘The Kingdom of God is like’ all sorts of normal human experience; not only so, but it may reveal its presence through any one of them. Only eyes which see, ears which hear, the mind which

interprets truly, are required for full revelation. For this world, with all worlds, is one universal commonwealth. The true Social Order is the Kingdom of God.

2. God is King. The Kingdom of God is not merely a social evolution, a fulfilment of human aspiration ; it is a literal Theocracy. The Kingdom of God in our midst is God in our midst, humbly, sincerely, reverently enthroned ; implicitly trusted, faithfully loved.

3. Jesus did not organise the Kingdom of God on earth. He did not frame a legal constitution for it. He did not propose to establish it by means of revolutions and upheavals. He did not set himself to overlay with its culture<sup>1</sup> the civilisation which it would eventually supplant.

For the Kingdom of God is everywhere and always and only *a life*, an individual life and a common life. It grows, it progresses, it evolves. It does not come, therefore, with observation. Its citizens do not cry dramatically, 'Lo, here it is !' They know that it is in the midst. The apocalyptic passages which warn of wars and rumours of wars in no way contradict those which tell of this silent process. Nowhere are we told that the Kingdom of God produces them. We are told that they are opportunities for the Kingdom, as every crisis is an opportunity. 'When you see these things know that another chance has come.' Some new thought, or hope, which has been germinating silently, will be added, if you seize the

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<sup>1</sup> As, for example, Great Britain set herself to overlay the old civilisation of India with British culture.

chance, to the human heritage of experience within the Kingdom.

Jesus had an unwavering faith in the energy of one germ of living life, given its chance, to propagate more life, to displace mountains of resistance, even to plant trees in the depths of the sea ! (xvii. 6). It was in this faith that he worked : the great problems of human need were dealt with indirectly, either by the example of his own practice, or by some significant act, or by a suggestive word left to work its way into regions apparently unconnected with it.<sup>1</sup> If only his followers had always evinced his faith in *life* !

4. Jesus was the prophet, not of subjection, but of emancipation, not of repression, but of realisation. In introducing the Kingdom of God he released among men the very spirit of freedom. He would not deal, therefore, with temporary abuses, or tie down his followers to specific rules and practices. 'Thou shalt' or 'shalt not' is very rare with him. Instead, one or two principles are suggested for the guidance of citizens, the application of these he trusted to themselves. He left immense scope for the utilising of every human gift, for the expression of a gradually advancing wisdom, and for the application of a fine adaptability and elasticity to the need

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<sup>1</sup> The result, poor indeed since we have proved slow of mind and slower still of action, is a commonplace of history. Jesus has created age by age convictions regarding every great social problem as it has emerged into consciousness ; sometimes these have been acted upon, sometimes not ; sometimes in acting upon them grave mistakes have been made, mainly caused by faithless, cowardly, often deliberate falling below his mind.

of each new age. It was so that he prepared the way for a Society in which Law should have no place at all.<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of liberty; Jesus is the leader through the wide-flung door into the open spaces; the freedom of the Kingdom involves freedom to make excursions into new worlds of thought and experience, to distinguish between the great things and the lesser things, to make blunders and to learn the lessons of them, to become individually and together better than the best we had imagined. But, the spirit of a disciplined freedom is an elusive spirit, hard to seize, very hard to retain and to cultivate.

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<sup>1</sup> That Jesus should have passed over whole stages and phases of the world's slow progress, dismissing them, as it were, with a wave of his hand, is one of the miracles of his great faith. Many centuries would pass during which not the spirit of freedom which is life but the spirit of subjection which is death should dominate the world's history—subjections to self, to each other, to antagonisms, racial, social, religious—subjections which should again and again bring whole peoples to the verge of ruin. He must have known also that we should *know* long before we should *act*. We *know* now that the individualistic conception of life is wholly evil, that the division of Society into 'class' and 'mass' is a thoroughly false division, that to end privilege and equalise opportunity is the only way out of the tangle in which our generation is involved; we *know* that co-operation is the one possible system which can obtain in a true commonwealth. These and a hundred similar truths we *know* to be the mind of Jesus as surely as if he had published them in a detailed proclamation. But, we have a deeply rooted fear of action. Whither might it lead us? What responsibilities might it impose upon us? '*Laissez faire!*' There are 'good' men who tacitly challenge the mind of Jesus every day of their lives; there are more 'good' men who shirk it and yet call him 'Lord' and 'Master.' As for the kingdoms of the world, they still deceive the very elect.

5. There is one Law of the Kingdom to which all are subject, from the King Himself to the most junior citizen, which distinguishes their Kingdom from all others, the Law of Love (vi. 27-38). Nothing gets near the King which is not of love. No one is a full citizen who does not practise love. All who live in love are citizens whether they know it or not.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. 'If we are to see the world as Christ saw it we must compel ourselves to look.' Let us in the presence of God look at the world ; and let us find some of the leading ideas implicit in this Gospel (see Appendix II. to Introductory Chapter) concerning the universal moral and social evils of human life, their treatment and their cure.

2. Let us recall the faith of Jesus that the kingdoms of the world were intended to be a Kingdom of God, of life, liberty, and love ; let us realise that to many the ideal of the Kingdom is, because of its failure, a mere dream, and let us fairly consider whether it is he or his citizens who have caused his vision to be lightly esteemed.

3. Let us make an act of corporate penitence, faith, and loyalty.

Guide, good Lord, to Thine own high purpose, all the future of this Thy world, and let not Thy people hinder Thy working.

III. THE KING.<sup>1</sup>

‘The Son of man hath not where to lay his head’ (ix. 58).

‘The Son of man is come eating and drinking. . . . Wisdom is justified of all her children’ (vii. 34, 35).

‘The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost’ (xix. 10). ‘A friend of publicans and sinners’ (vii. 34).

‘The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins’ (v. 24).

‘The Son of man is lord of the Sabbath’ (vi. 5).

‘The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected. . . . If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me’ (ix. 18–27 ; xii. 8, 9).

‘From henceforth shall the Son of man be seated at the right hand of God’ (xxii. 69. See also the apocalyptic references in xvii., xviii., xxi.).

*Notes.*

God is King of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus is King, in God’s name, of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is the Christian claim.

1. The biographers of Jesus are unique in a common quality of what we may call objectivity of approach <sup>2</sup> to their subject. They do not expound Jesus. They are not amazed at his amazingness. Paul’s mind had already been at work systematising Christian thought concerning him, finding in him the world’s Divine Saviour and Son of God ; these men

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<sup>1</sup> In this section I have apparently departed from Luke. But I do not think I have departed from Luke’s mind.—A. H. S.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. most of the lives of the saints. The attention of the reader is constantly drawn to the holy man’s holiness, the humble man’s humility, the saint’s miraculous powers or experience. Adamnan’s St. Columba probably most nearly approaches the Gospels in perfect simplicity.

go to their task as if the incidents they relate were their own comment, as indeed they are. The Person stands out from those few pages the one living and enduring and universal Son of Man. He holds us by the subtle, overwhelming force of his powerful personality, a personality large and simple, noble and gracious, original, independent, authoritative. He (not Augustus) is easily Master of his century, of the centuries ever since, of all the masters the world has known. This is a part of what is meant by the title he himself chose, *The Son of Man*.

2. The apostles of Jesus have travelled the world over making him known, with strange results. The Jesus of the Western missionary was, naturally, 'the lean and strenuous personality'<sup>1</sup> of the Western ideal. He lived the common life. He was active, practical, constructive. He laid emphasis upon a resolute and fruitful repentance and rectitude of life. The teaching was based upon the Gospels and was true. But (e.g.) in India there emerges a Jesus of long silence and patience and serenity, of a forty days' fast and retreat, of long nights spent in solitary contemplation among the lonely hills, of a mystic vision of life, of wandering days, and of a detached interior life amid a crowd of men. The 'oriental Jesus' was found in the Gospels and was true. Montefiore and Zangwill find an Israelitish Jesus; China is finding a Chinese Jesus; Africa will find an African Jesus; he compels consciousness of kinship everywhere. But every local Jesus is an incomplete Jesus, for there is no schism

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<sup>1</sup> J. H. G. Wells.

in his nature, he is one and undivided, he is all mankind—and all womankind—the centre and uniting link of our racial unity.

As he travels from continent to continent his mind becomes the final mind. He silently forms the ideal public opinion, social and moral. Those who bear his name are judged with accuracy by his standards. For in him are found blended and balanced and perfected all those elements of character which are instinctively recognised to be the truly human. We mean all this when we say of Jesus that he is *the Son of Man*.

3. There was nothing stately or distant about Jesus. The impression is rather of unaffected friendliness and helpfulness. He loved men and loved to have them around him. Women were at home with him. Children nestled in his arms. Outsiders were gathered in to a charmed circle. He appreciated keenly all fineness of character. He was quickly susceptible to the mood of individual or group. He met men where they were, and met them as men; he never had 'a case.' Nobody was 'out of it' with him who cared to be 'in it.'

He not only gave, he asked for friendship. There is something which hurts in his efforts to find understanding and sympathy, for not even his three most intimate friends ever rose to their chance.

At the heart of this friendly life, almost unrecognised at the time, lay his vocational life, severe almost beyond conception. To the call of each moment he brought every particle of power. Men knew themselves safe in turning to him, this

serving, giving, feeding, healing, shepherding, loving man :

‘If any wander, thou dost call him backe ;  
 If any be not forward thou incitest him ;  
 Thou dost expect if any should grow slacke ;  
 If any seem but willing thou invitest him ;  
 Or if he do offend thee thou acquittest him :  
 Thou findst the lost, thou followest him that flies,  
 Healing the sicke, and quickening him that dies ;  
 Thou art the lame man’s friendly staffe, the blind man’s  
 eyes.’<sup>1</sup>

While throughout all he kept before him the bearing of the particular call of the moment upon the ultimate intention—the revelation of that Commonwealth of grace of which he, Son and Brother of every human soul, was undoubted King.

4. This brings us to the element of conflict in the life of Jesus. His object was to found on earth a strong and faithful citizenship of the Kingdom of God. War was inevitable as soon as this aim was realised, unless the accredited leaders of his nation had joined with him, which, very naturally, they did not. He was independent (xx. 1–8). He defied the law, that is, their reading of it (vi. 1–5, 6–11). He cared nothing for traditions (v. 33–39). He exorcised demons—by what sanction ? (xi. 15). Above all, he companied with the wrong groups (v. 27–32 ; xv. 1 ; xix. 1–11). From the point of view of national opinion he was a revolutionary, before the end it was felt that he was a dangerous anarchist. Let his impracticable idealism prevail and there would be an end to all secure foundations of society.

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<sup>1</sup> Giles Fletcher.

For his part, he accepted the conflict. Their great things were his little things ; their separations, casuistries, expediences, were intolerable to him (vi. 11 ; xi. 53). Above all, their conception of the Kingdom of God and his had nothing whatever in common. Long before the end any hopes he may have had of carrying the nation with him in a spiritual movement had passed. But it would be victory for him and the Kingdom if he could destroy for all time such grave misconceptions as the ambitions of his nation had associated with it, and could make clear the spiritual purity of those principles of the Kingdom through which alone it must prevail. He would have no mistakes which he could prevent.

Therefore Jesus set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem, and history marched to its inevitable crisis. If the writers of the Gospels are correct he did not wait for Jerusalem to act ; he deliberately chose that action should take place. The ultimatum lay apparently with Jerusalem and Rome ; it really lay with him. His service as Son of Man was not complete until he had showed that even of the King the Kingdom asks for all and is infinitely worthy of all ; that the Kingdom conquers through apparent defeat, prospers abundantly even through the offered life. *Christus vincit.*

#### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider some of the practical implications of the Kinghood of Jesus, (a) for ourselves as individuals ; (b) for the Society of those who bear his name.

‘ Christ is Victor ! Christ is King ! Christ is Lord of all.’  
(Litany of Dunkeld.)

‘ With bowed head and open heart we offer ourselves. We can do no more ; we dare do no less.’

#### IV. THE ADVENTURE OF THE KINGDOM.

‘ Put out into the deep and let out your nets for a draught ’ (v. 1-11). ‘ Give ye them to eat. . . . Make them sit down in companies, about fifty in each ’ (ix. 11-17).

A woman who had spent all her living upon physicians and could not be healed of any, came behind him and touched the border of his garment (viii. 43-48). The centurion sent friends to him saying, ‘ Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee ; but speak the word and my servant shall be healed ’ (vii. 2-10).

‘ If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye would say to this sycamine tree, “ Be thou rooted up and be thou planted in the sea,” and it would obey you ’ (xvii. 5, 6).

#### Notes.

The whole Bible is a series of records of spiritual adventure, the silent summons of God within the soul of some chosen man or woman, followed inevitably by some enterprise into a hitherto unknown world of thought or action. No two records are alike ; each is a high romance. Abram is called to found a new family, Moses to educate a free nation, David to evolve and to represent a true ideal of Kinghood, Elijah to discover the comparative values of destructive and constructive methods of reform, Zerubbabel and his successors to show that out of ruin and desolation men and nations may still arise and fulfil themselves ; it was to Jonah, a man of small soul and

little faith, that the message of the universal Godhead of Jahveh was entrusted ; to the pure and delicate spirit of Hosea came the call, from the text of the tragic story of his own home, to preach the gospel of long patience, tender pity, loving discipline, for the renewal of penitence and the growth of a will to goodness, in derelict souls.

They were adventures for the Kingdom of God before the Kingdom of God was fully revealed.

1. The Gospels not only carry forward the record of adventure for the Kingdom, they know that invisible kingdom after which the adventurers of earlier times were feeling, and introduce in Jesus a leader who makes the call to the service of it articulate, who in virtue of his qualities of faith and character, by means of the attraction of his person, the *timbre* of his voice, and the wisdom of his words, makes of faith in the Kingdom 'a very-great-indeed adventure.'

'Come ye after me,' he says, and men and women leave home and living and the safe things ; they simply rise and follow. 'Put out into the deep and let down your nets.' The miracle of that morning was, not the big haul of fish, but the transformation wrought in the spirit of those weary fishermen through their adventure in obedience. 'Give ye them to eat.' 'Bring me your five loaves and two fishes.' 'Find for yourselves as you distribute the meal the absolute value of opportunity and material in the hands of faith.' Make constant acts of faith in the impossible, and you will find that the impossible will constantly happen. It is the high heart which has the chance of helping to work the miracles of the Kingdom of God.

2. Jesus and the Kingdom had therefore no use for the man who is dependent upon moral and spiritual crutches or props or shelters. 'Take nothing for your journey,' he said, denying to those first infant missionaries whom he sent out all possible human solace. He would not even permit the unspeakable upholding of a title. What an encouragement to good works to be called 'Benefactor'! (xxii. 25, 26). What an incentive to good living and high effort to be called 'Leader'! (ix. 48). 'No,' said Jesus, 'stand upon your unaided interior worth, *be yourself*' (xx. 45, 46). It was thus that Jesus taught his first citizens the dignity of naked responsibility, and gave them the full use of their faculties of imagination and will and execution. He was preparing the way of a long succession of adventurers for the Kingdom : healers of the world's sicknesses and sorrows, pathfinders through the world's waste places, explorers of the world's possibilities, redeemers of the world's humanity, peacemakers after the world's wars ; soldiers of the armies of the King, ambassadors who represent the King, forhttellers of the glories of the King. Even the adventure of the martyrs will not cease if the citizens of the Kingdom are but faithful.

3. Jesus delighted greatly in the adventurous spirit. 'I have seen nothing like this !' he exclaimed when the centurion's message was brought to him (vii. 1-10). He had words of warmest appreciation, for the sick woman who ventured a touch (viii. 43-48), the sinful woman who had no words but only tears and ointment wherewith to express her penitence (vii. 36-50), Zaccheus who ventured his dignity as a

## 84. THE KINGDOM AND THE KING

citizen to the branches of the wayside tree (xix. 1-10), and the widow who adventured among the big subscriptions her one farthing, 'all that she had' (xxi. 1-4).

'I know I was a damned fool,' says Septimus in Locke's novel. 'So are you. So are the apostles, the missionaries, the explorers, all who dream great dreams. All damned fools, but a glorious company all the same. I'm not ashamed to belong to it.'

It is not only a glorious folly ; it is far more, it is the one only chance of the world's redemption.

### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider something of what is involved for its citizens in the adventure of the Kingdom of God, not forgetting that we live in a time of crisis, and that at such times, according to Jesus, the Kingdom is near ; e.g.—

(a) A crusade against the sins of the Social Order—

the policy of *laissez faire*—all tendency to minimise the demand of the Kingdom, personal, group, national, international.

(b) Determined effort to discover, practise, and make known the principles of the Kingdom, with special reference to the present need.

(c) The establishment of the fame of our Master.

'Lord, lift us out of our private-mindedness, and give us public souls to work for Thy Kingdom by daily creating that atmosphere of a happy temper and generous heart which alone can bring the great peace.'

V. CITIZENSHIP OF THE KINGDOM. 1. THE INDIVIDUAL CITIZEN.

‘ Whosoever shall not enter the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein. To such belongeth the Kingdom of God ’ (xviii. 15–17). ‘ Thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Even so, Father ’ (x. 22).

‘ Strive to enter in by the narrow door ’ (xii. 23–30).

‘ What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and forfeit his own self ? ’ (ix. 22–25).

‘ The Gospel of the Kingdom is preached and every man entereth violently into it ’ (xvi. 14–16). ‘ I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.’ ‘ Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head ’ (ix. 57–62). ‘ Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death.’ ‘ I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me ’ (xxii. 31–34).

‘ Which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not sit down and count the cost, whether he hath wherewith to complete it ? ’ (xiv. 25–33). ‘ No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God ’ (ix. 57–62).

‘ The lamp of the body is the eye : when the eye is single the whole body is full of light . . . as when the lamp with its bright shining doth give thee light ’ (xi. 33–36).

‘ First the Kingdom.’ ‘ Who is the faithful steward, the wise man whom his lord shall set over all his household, to give them their portion of food in due season ? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he shall set him over all that he hath ’ (xii. 42–44). ‘ Let your loins be girt about, and your lamps be burning, and ye yourselves like to men who look for their lord ’ (xii. 35–49).

*Notes.*

There is the Kingdom of God on earth, there is the King, there is the adventure of the Kingdom, and there are citizens.

1. To enrol and to train citizens was an end with Jesus. A little company of men and women forsook for a time, oriental fashion, their ordinary callings to follow with him the happy unconventional intimate life of the road and the field. He made them his friends, appreciated them, championed them, explained to them his lovely stories, and talked with them about those matters which interested himself. He made them think out their difficulties, test their powers, and make experiments in the service of the Kingdom. He was silently inaugurating the Kingdom upon a new basis, and was training its first Social Group.

He trained them one by one. He cared not only for a body of citizens, but for the individual citizen, not even only for the citizen, but for the man who is the citizen.<sup>1</sup> He showed them first, therefore—

‘What ’twas to be a man : to give, not take ;  
To serve, not rule ; to nourish, not devour ;  
To help, not crush ; if need, to die, not live.’

It is the supreme, it is the inclusive showing.

2. The terms of admission to the company were severe. Desire after the Kingdom of God in one or another of its manifold aspects laid hold upon a Matthew (viii. 27-32), a Simon (v. 1-11), a young ruler (xviii. 18-30), a Zaccheus (xix. 1-10), a Martha or a Mary (x. 38-42). There is no need to labour the idea of ‘mysteries of the Kingdom,’ but the inquirer found at once that there was a *without* and a *within* (not necessarily in either case the apparent condition),

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<sup>1</sup> ‘The man precedes the citizen.’—Renan.

that there is a Freedom of the Kingdom, attainable upon conditions. Any man seeking citizenship must humbly, seriously, unreservedly mean it. There can be no lightly achieved and lightly relinquished citizenship. Possession in the Kingdom is a great privilege, the issues at stake are momentous, and the words of Jesus to men and women who incline to play with the idea of joining his Company are very stern : 'Leave all.' 'Sell all.' 'Come as a child would come.' The creative evolution of the Kingdom of God is not concerned with time, but the chance of citizenship is offered to man in time. 'I will follow thee, but first . . .' There can be no 'but.' The true citizen brings heart, soul, strength, mind, interior motive and will, exterior movement and action, the whole team he drives, to be at the disposal of King and Kingdom. He has counted the cost, and has made a final and an absolute decision. Matthew rose, left all, and followed Jesus. The young ruler went away sorrowful.

Jesus calls for an absorbing patriotism. The citizen may remain in his old world, among its affairs and interests ; but these have completely changed in value, they have become an integral part, although a mere fraction, of larger and more absorbing affairs and interests. King and Kingdom possess him.

3. The character of the true citizen emerges clearly from the teaching of Jesus. He presents a standard which frankly aims at the impossible. We learn, for example, that it is far more important to be than to do. The citizen becomes, so to speak, because he is. Obedience is not to law but to spirit. Beatitudes

supplant commandments. Specific virtues become a minor concern, the citizen is genuine, loyal, courageous, benevolent ; but he does not set out to practise these virtues, he sets out to be of the same mind as his King. He becomes, therefore, a simple, straightforward, wholesome person. There is no sentimentalism or emotionalism, or sensationalism about him ; there is no snobbishness, no provincialism, there are no casuistries, or diplomacies, no shams of any sort, about him. Unless there be something radically wrong he is a gay and carefree, an ever youthful person. The ends for which he lives are the only ends worth living for, and while he lives for those ends his needs are the concern of the King. He belongs to the category of the birds and the flowers. He may not know where to lay his head, but he is in the best of company.

4. The one basic, formative, energising, motive force is the motive force of Love. 'Is it of Love ?' is the one question which he must ask of himself concerning every desire or purpose, word or action, of his life. It is a hard question. 'We forbade a man to cast out demons in thy name, because he follows not with us' (ix. 49, 50). Was that of love ? 'Let us call down fire upon this village which does not receive us' (ix. 51-56). Would that be of love ? 'Rebuke this wretched blind beggar who calls after us' (xviii. 35-43), 'and these women who crowd upon us with their babes' (xviii. 15-17). Would that be of love ? 'This thy son, the rake, gets the fatted calf !' (xv. 29). 'This thy brother must be welcomed with love.' 'Who shall be greatest in the

Kingdom ? Who shall lead ? Whose plans shall prevail when the interests of the Kingdom are being discussed ? Who shall walk first in processions and have the chief seat ?' Are these questions of love ? The for-self-and-not-for-the-State mood is absolutely incompatible with a true citizenship.

It was—it will do us good to own it gladly—one who would be reckoned a rank outsider who best stood this test of the citizen spirit. 'A certain Samaritan . . . saw him and was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in them oil and wine ; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said, "Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more I, when I come back, will repay thee " ' (x. 25-37).

The authentic citizen of the Kingdom of God can never be a negligible person. He has romance, expectancy, inspiration. He sees the principle which underlies the smallest detail. He sees the local and temporary in terms of the universal and the eternal. He sees the good that is not yet as if it already were. In the midst of apparent defeat he walks steadily and surely as his Lord did before him.

#### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Since our personal character is the first charge upon us as citizens of the Kingdom of God, let us make careful survey of our lives in their strength or weakness, in our circumstances and with our opportunities, taking as our guide such words of Jesus as vi. 27-49 or xvii. 1-10.

‘Whatsoever things are pure and lovely, whatsoever things are gentle and generous, whatsoever things are noble and self-forgetful, those things, O Lord, grant that we may with one accord pursue.’

## V. CITIZENSHIP OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. 2. THE CORPORATE BODY OF CITIZENS.

‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom’ (xii. 31-34). ‘I appoint unto you a Kingdom’ (xxi. 19, 30).

‘The Kings of the earth have lordship over them, and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But it shall not be so among you: he that is the greater among you let him become as the younger, and he that is chief as he that doth serve. . . . I am in the midst of you as he that serveth’ (xxii. 24-27).

All that believed were together, and had all things in common . . . and day by day continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts ii. 44-46). The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul, and not one of them said that aught of the things he possessed was his own . . . neither was there among them any that lacked . . . distribution was made unto each according as any had need (Acts iv. 32-35).

### Notes.

Jesus saw the Kingdom of God on earth as a Society of closest possible intimacy, evolving a common character, common convictions, common loyalties, common effective action. His era of human emancipation was to be an era of the spirit of brotherhood.

1. Himself set the standard. Luke sees Jesus as the very embodiment of the brotherly spirit. His brotherliness was instinctive, he could not travel

through a day leaving any brother unhelped ; it was also deliberate and effective. He gave himself royally. And since brotherhood is only perfect when it is perfectly reciprocal, he received as royally as he gave. The brotherliness of the King is his best lesson to his citizens.

2. Jesus had a social method as well as a social ideal. Knowing well that the Kingdom must be evolved out of essentially selfish social systems, and that his citizens were poor things at best, he set himself to produce an *esprit de corps*, a realising together of the things of the Kingdom, to which the whole Society should instinctively respond.

Lest the definiteness of his intention should become lost in vague generality, he warned in detail against the peculiar sins against the spirit of brotherhood : unforgivingness (vi. 35 ; xvii. 2), jealousy (ix. 49, 50), criticalness (vi. 41), exclusiveness (ix. 49, 50), the struggle after the first place (xxii. 24-27), carelessness towards the weaker brother (xvii.).

At the last he left the supreme aid of a common Act of Brotherhood, which should be the symbol of brotherly unity throughout the ages (xii. 14-23), 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. . . . Take this and divide it among yourselves.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It was the custom in ancient feudal France for the lord of the house to rise at the close of the chief meal, and to take bread and break and pass it down the table until the meanest servant present had tasted of it. It was the symbol of the unity of the household.

Our amazing default with regard to the Love Feast began on the evening of its institution when the twelve disputed the

3. The Kingdom of God on earth is, according to Jesus, a perfect democracy. He had no faith in dictatorship, very little apparently in leadership ; the Brotherhood must be of one mind and hope and purpose concerning the great things of the Kingdom, must act together as one man in all corporate activities ; every brother must stand beside every other brother in time of need.

4. Jesus lived in a very small world, but it was sufficiently large for the expression of his mind concerning the whole world. He thought and spoke in terms of the whole world. His Gospel of the Kingdom was literally an 'edict of comprehension.'<sup>1</sup> He would permit no limitations or exclusions or separations. In effect every man was reckoned a citizen of the Kingdom of God until he ruled himself out of it. But it was necessary that he should realise himself within it. The ambassadors of the Kingdom would do much to effect this, but the impression conveyed by Luke is that Jesus counted more upon the impact upon the world of a united body of brotherly men and women<sup>2</sup> than upon the finest propaganda. The former was the harder task. For it meant that the very soul of Love must form itself, incarnate itself, express itself, make itself felt,

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leadership, and has continued to this day. The Lord's Supper is the chief symbol of mutual exclusion between brother and brother. Till this wrong is righted, or until the Love Feast be re-established it is difficult to see how the reign of Love can be inaugurated.

<sup>1</sup> Seeley, *Ecce Homo*.

<sup>2</sup> 'Having tried everything else man will some day soon seriously begin to apply to life the law of brotherly love.' —Dumas.

through companies of men and women who would be (and have been) slow either to realise or to accept the implications of their calling.<sup>1</sup>

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider some of the implications of brotherhood :

1. Within the Brotherhood : absolute mutual loyalty, no jealousy, scandal, insistence upon the first place ; mutual burden-bearing.

2. Towards brothers who follow not with us : cultivation of a hospitable heart, and of a common tongue. Entire trust in our brother's good faith. Determination to break down barriers, personal, social, national, international, religious, and ecclesiastical.

3. Towards brothers who are apparently outside : not social reform but friendship, not pity but sympathy, not the crowd but the individual.

‘Grant to our heart an invincible power of love.’

‘Bless us, even all of us together, with the light of Thy love, since by that light only we learn the law of life, righteousness, mercy, and pain.’

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<sup>1</sup> The Society of Jesus has never come into being. This is the tragedy of the Christian centuries, it is still the tragedy of the twentieth. Excepting in groups, the Brotherhoods and Fellowships of history, the Company of the followers of Jesus has failed to utilise the vital and vitalising force of a body so united. The intention has been persistently conventionalised and minimised ; more or less frankly we have chosen who shall be our brothers, we are often at war with our brothers, it would be easier to do anything for some brothers than simply to be their brother. The proposition of the Kingdom of God is still the proposition of brotherhood.

## VI. THE SERVANTS OF THE KINGDOM.

‘ The harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest.

‘ Go your ways, behold I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves.

‘ Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes.

‘ Salute no man by the way.

‘ Into whatsoever house ye shall enter, first say, Peace to this house. If a son of peace be there your peace shall rest upon him ; if not it shall turn to you again.

‘ And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his hire.

‘ Go not from house to house.

‘ And into whatsoever city ye enter and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you.

‘ Heal the sick that are therein.

‘ And say unto them, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

‘ But into whatsoever city ye shall enter and they receive you not, go into the streets thereof and say, Even the dust from your city that cleaveth to our feet we do wipe off against you.

‘ Howbeit know this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.’

‘ He that heareth you heareth me.

‘ He that rejecteth you rejecteth me.

‘ He that rejecteth me rejecteth Him that sent me’ (x. 1-16).

‘ When I sent you forth without purse and wallet and shoes, lacked ye anything ? ’ They said, ‘ Nothing ’ (xx. 35).

‘ There is no man who hath left house or wife or brethren or parents or children for the Kingdom of God’s sake who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life ’ (xviii. 28-30).

*Notes.*

‘Every Christian is the vicar of Christ.’<sup>1</sup> Every citizen is a representative and servant of the Kingdom of God. He carries the dignity of the Kingdom in his person. He does not know from hour to hour into what strange situation, to what authoritative duty, he may be called. He may have no precise instructions. It is therefore supremely important that he should know the King’s mind on the general principles which govern his life and action as representing the Kingdom. Luke gathers these principles together in the Commission given to the ‘Seventy.’

But how take such words as these? Were they not for the one occasion only? Are they not exaggerated by Luke, and necessarily to be minimised, or generalised? When an oriental teacher uses apparently exaggerated language his scholars know that ordinary language will not serve his purpose, and that he is calling for thoughtful attention. He is not laying down a law to be heard and obeyed; he is suggesting a hidden principle to be discovered and applied. What he has said will not mean less, it will mean more, because the meaning is not immediately obvious. Thus—

1. ‘I send you into the world *as lambs*.’ It is an unattractive and a difficult similitude. Who would resemble the brainless, freakish, irresponsible creature which careers madly about for sheer joy of life, and would probably career quite innocently into the very jaws of the wolf? Is it intended that

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<sup>1</sup> Lacordaire.

there must be something of the child creature in the representative of the Kingdom of God, something trustful and fearless, which attracts not by subtlety but by simplicity ?

Or, 'Take no purse, or wallet, or shoes.' The point is, is this a call to asceticism, or is it an edict of emancipation ? The true pilgrim goes free. He leaves his impedimenta behind him, food for days to come, money which might be stolen, anything which would add to his burden.<sup>1</sup> Jesus had no use for an ambassadorial staff whose attention must be divided between the affairs of the Kingdom and all sorts of personal cares and incumbrances. Or again, 'Salute no man by the way.' He 'set his own face steadfastly towards Jerusalem' (ix. 51), but he saluted many men and women, held long conversations, did many kindnesses upon that journey. Yet was there no loitering, no wasting of intimacies ; there was a certain grave reserve, the impression of a constant sense of urgent business. Relationships were not less courteous, but they were more vital. (Study for this point Luke's account of that journey (ix. 51) until his first glimpse of Jerusalem (xix. 41).)

2. If the journey is made in haste, the visit to house or city is made at leisure. The servant of the

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<sup>1</sup> Three missionaries were travelling in India. At one stage they had to change trains at a remote railway junction. The only other passenger was a woman pilgrim with whom they had some conversation. They told her that they were servants of God ; she mentioned her pilgrimage. Seeing their anxiety about their luggage she lifted her tiny bundle of necessaries and made some smiling reference to their travelling paraphernalia. 'Travel light.'

Kingdom of God carries and receives the salutation of peace. He is in no haste, he is not restless, he is not too busy to stay, he is there to break down barriers, to make King and Kingdom desirable. It must not be through his default if they are rejected.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Campaign of the Seventy was successful. The forces of evil yielded almost miraculously before them. The name of Jesus was obviously a name to conjure with.

The words of Jesus at this point are deeply important :

- (a) Although the Kingdom is set against apparently invincible foes, the power of evil is already broken. 'I saw Satan [symbol of that power] fall from heaven.' This is the faith of the servants of the Kingdom.
- (b) The servants of the Kingdom have authority over evil things and persons.<sup>2</sup>

Their interior attitude towards their authority is supremely important. They may be entirely confident, but there must be no elation or exuberance or self-consciousness. Their authority is never their own ; their dignity has nothing personal about it. They are called indeed to rejoice, but it is joy to find themselves on the roll-call of the servants of the Kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Shake off the dust.' 'But do not shake the dust from your feet against a city or a soul, until by walking up and down the streets of it you have contracted much dust to be shaken off.' (Edward Irving.)

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that this authority is delegated to the Seventy, not to the Twelve alone. There is here no limited Apostolic succession.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider the problem of vocation :

- (a) That every human service is vocation, and may be direct service of the Kingdom—how best may this fact become realised ?
- (b) That no servant of the Kingdom is self-appointed, nor appointed by his fellow-servants, but by the King—how this fact must affect mutual relationships (as between master and servant, committee and worker, etc.), how it must modify urgent general invitations to service (e.g. foreign missions), and other obvious situations.
- (c) That all servants of the Kingdom in every part of the world under the present changeful and restless conditions are face to face with peculiar difficulties—largely difficulties of adaptation of the Good News of the Kingdom to new ideals and aspirations and needs.

Let us ask for all servants of the King that they may have an open mind, sympathy, wisdom, faith, courage.

Let us strive to make our own calling sure.

‘ Give a pure intention, a patient faith, the assurance of conquest, the bliss of Thy fellowship.’

‘ Give to us to serve Thee with a quiet freedom.’

‘ Speaking the truth in love, may we show it to be lovely.’

## PART III

### THE GREAT SYMBOLS

SECTION I.—The Symbol of a Manger.

SECTION II.—The Symbol of a Cross.

SECTION III.—The Symbols of an Empty Grave and of a  
Living Presence.

SECTION IV.—The Symbol of a Common Meal.



### *Introductory.*

Under Luke's sympathetic guidance we learn to revere Jesus, last and greatest of the prophets of Israel and of the world, founder of the new humanity which claimed to be the Kingdom of God on earth.

The nineteen centuries which have passed since he lived have proved the almost inconceivable fact that this peasant Jew, who lived among his own decaying people and died at their instance the death of a traitor, is the outstanding figure of history. On towards Jesus, and, Onwards from Jesus : these are the two chapters of our human record.

He died and was buried, and his followers told the story that he lived again ; and a religion was founded, articulate and complete, with Jesus as the Christ, the Divine Son and Representative of God and the Saviour of mankind, as the Heart of it. The Gospels were written by men conscious of and accepting all that was implied in this religion. The Christian Church was founded in *this*, not in the former, conception of Jesus.

Certain incidents are related of him upon which are based the doctrines of the Christian Faith. These are biographically told ; but are far more than biographical, they symbolise truth, universal and fundamental, felt after by prophetic souls of every race, inexpressible in any human language—Jesus himself could not express them in language. They are the fundamental truths concerning God, the Divine Order, the mysteries of life and being and of human

and divine relationship. Jesus stands for the Kingship of the Kingdom of God on earth ; Christ stands for the revelation of those fundamental truths, which are the 'mysteries of the Kingdom of God,' the symbols of which are : a Manger, a Cross, an Empty Grave and a living Presence, a Common Meal. To these we may add the Symbol of the Church, with which Luke's second pamphlet is concerned.

## SECTION I.—THE SYMBOL OF A MANGER

### I. THE LITTLE CHILD AND THOSE WHO SURROUNDED HIM.

She brought forth her first-born son ; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (ii. 7).

' You shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger ' (ii. 12).

' My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For He hath looked upon the low estate of His handmaiden ;

For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed ' (i. 46-55).

#### *Notes.*

1. It was, as we have seen, a very 'grown-up' world, for human pride dominated it—pride of power in Rome, pride of learning in Greece, pride of religion and of race in little Palestine—and pride is a 'grown-up' quality, an inseparable barrier between man as son and God as Father.

It was into this world, so like our own, that the writers of the first and third Gospels flung their challenge. 'The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ' wrote Mark, and plunged forthwith into the heart of his story. 'No, not the beginning,' say Matthew and Luke, and both preface their books with circumstantial and quite distinct accounts of the birth and infancy of Jesus. Matthew records the fulfilment of his nation's hope in a new-born royal Child; Luke, human and world-embracing, sees the fulfilment of the world's hope in that same Child, lowly and unprivileged; 'laid in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.'

The main point in both cases is that Mark's beginning is not the beginning of the Gospel, if the Gospel be a Gospel at all. Jesus Christ did not flash mysterious, full-grown, out of the unknown, a beautiful lonely historic Figure, he is not only the Prophet and King of the Kingdom of God on earth, he is not the Founder of a system of thought. He is first of all a little Child. A little Child shall lead humanity; let the proud world suffer the little Child.

2. The first chapters of the two Gospels are deeply significant of the mood out of which they sprang, a mood of quiet rapture. It is Luke who makes it live, who preserves it in his story as a permanent mood. They are real, those men and women. Hope-awaiting, Child-awaiting folk: the good old priest, who saw, at length, and whose loosened tongue sang of—

‘the heart of mercy of our God  
Wherein the Dayspring from on high shall visit us,

To shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow  
of death,

To guide our way into the paths of peace' ;

and his wife, a still young, living, and life-bearing old woman, those good simple faithful souls under the stars, counted worthy of the vision ; and those waiting saints of the temple, man and woman, jubilant over—

‘ the salvation  
Prepared before the face of all people,  
A Light for the unveiling of the Gentiles,  
The Glory of Thy people Israel.’

We sing Luke's songs still, therefore, for they are songs inspired in the hearts of men and women who were getting first-sight glimpses of divine-human things.

3. Lastly, Luke tells of the couple most nearly concerned, Joseph, the village carpenter who proved well worthy of the guardianship so strangely thrust upon him,<sup>1</sup> and the girl Mary, Luke's ideal woman.

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<sup>1</sup> The Matthew and Luke stories differ widely. Mary is to Matthew a silent oriental girl, a passive medium of fulfilment, entirely under the guidance of her husband. Joseph is the central figure. To him is entrusted the sacred charge of the Child and his mother, and in stern silence he fulfils the trust. To Matthew the Child is prince in disguise, born to experience the jealousy of upstart reigning princes. He is born, as recognised by the Magi, the universal King of prophetic vision. In place of Luke's picture of a homelessness which yet possessed the world, Matthew's emphasis is therefore upon secrecy. Even the private life at Nazareth impresses this upon us, for Archelaus is as great a danger as was his father, and the Child of David's House must be faithfully guarded.

Matthew deals in royal archives. He sees Israel's history moving to its climax : Abraham, David, Zerubbabel, the Christ. He sees humanity travelling after the Star. Beyond and in all, he sees God, moving towards the fulness of His time. The Child is fulfilment in every sense.

Never was a portrait drawn in so few lines so satisfying in its pure and restrained loveliness. Mary is grave and gracious, perceptive and receptive, strong, unself-conscious, simple, but of a thoughtful simplicity.

What a spirit was in her ! How unsurprised she was by the message so suddenly spoken to her ; how immediately, trustfully, humbly she responded to it ! She did not belittle herself. If this were the call of God, then, ' Lo me here, God's handmaiden ' ; He knows me lowly, and He knows best. With natural longing for a woman's sympathy Mary went to Elisabeth, and the two mothers spent quiet months together. There is no weakness in either woman, there is a sort of holy power. ' He has remembered my lowliness,' said Mary. ' Blessed is she who believed,' said Elisabeth, thinking doubtless of her husband's failure.

When in strange circumstances Mary's child came to her, and after, this rare woman, who was no talker, but of those who meditate, pondered, hiding her thoughts in her heart. The piercing sword was soon felt ; ' I must be in my Father's concerns,' said her boy (ii. 40). ' I have other mothers,' he added later (viii. 21).

Luke makes no comment, but here is the supreme woman as he saw her, the receptive, giving woman—

' There she stood  
Even with such life of majesty, warm life.' <sup>1</sup>

' *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum ; benedicta tu inter mulieribus.*'

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<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare wrote of another woman, but the words apply to no woman as they do to the Mother of Jesus.

It was of such a circle, and such a spirit, that our great Son was given to us ; and these were they who received him for us.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us meditate upon the songs of these chapters (i. and ii.), noting especially the aspect of the Hope of the World upon which each singer dwells.

‘ Everywhere let us seek to meet Thee ; everywhere let us delight to find Thee.’

**II. THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH.**

‘ The Son of Man ’ (v. 24 ; vi. 5, 22, etc.).

‘ My mother and my brethren are these ’ (viii. 19, 20).

‘ He shall be called the Son of the Most High ’ (i. 32).

‘ This is My Son, my Chosen ’ (ix. 28-36).

‘ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure among men ’ (ii. 14).

*Notes.*

That Jesus entered human life virgin born is noted by Luke, but not emphasised. Truth represented must not be obscured by miracle.

It is as if the young Church, in the light of her experience of her wondrous Lord, had leapt to this as the only possible explanation of his being ;<sup>1</sup> for, as we have seen Luke<sup>2</sup> follows Mark, the birth stories follow the life stories. Then Luke, seer and poet, knowing

<sup>1</sup> It must not be forgotten that the idea is deeply rooted in human imagination. The Christian willingly acknowledges that this is one more ‘ Birth Story.’ But how it contrasts with all the others !

<sup>2</sup> And Matthew.

that the Church was feeling after truths too great for formula, gathered the floating stories, wove them into this lovely idyll, and left them to imagination and love, faith and conviction. If they are history they are far greater than mere history, if legend they are charged with Divine inspiration, if parabolic exposition, they expound the deep things of God. However read, the Bethlehem story is to be understood only 'when the mind

' . . . a pilgrim now far more  
Away from flesh, and less by thinking pent,  
To vision almost of a seer can soar.'

The directions in which Luke's own mind travelled seem to be mainly two :

1. The shepherds, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna are the representatives of the long succession of men and women of every race<sup>1</sup>—the humble, reverent, prophetic—

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<sup>1</sup> Many years ago I wrote a little sketch of a youth, who, haunted by dim memories of the story of Jesus heard in his childhood, set out on pilgrimage to find him. Immediately I was inundated with parallel stories, some of them deeply touching, most of them from India, several from China, one or two from Japan. Here is one, which I give in the words of the preface to the latest edition of my story. 'She was a Hindu widow . . . a teacher of *shlokas*. . . . But the burden of her teaching was this, "Great messengers have come and gone, but our need still remains ; the world is still sorrowful and sinning, we still long and are still unsatisfied. God *must* yet speak ; a Helper must be sent to us. And he will be sent." So she preached of the Coming One and waited for his coming until she had become an old woman. One day a missionary was present in a house in which she was telling again her old message. "Did you not know, lady, that he had come ?" she asked. . . . The seeress at once recognised her "Coming One" and taking him to her heart, like the aged widow of the temple,

who have watched for the Redeemer of the world, and would recognise him should he appear. For Luke in this prologue comprehends all highest human instinct, desire and faith, and, writing after the event, all highest human consummation. The world had gone wrong. Civilisation had followed civilisation, experiments all of them in human living ; all had failed to achieve a satisfying humanity, a Kingdom of God upon earth. Leadership also, whether of despot, prophet, or priest, had led nowhere. Humanity had asked for a MAN from the Lord. Here was Humanity's own Man, THE SON OF MAN HIMSELF. This is Luke's theme, suggested in the prologue, interpreted in the biography.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Man had not only looked for the realisation of

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“gave thanks to God, and spoke of him to all them that were looking for redemption.”

<sup>1</sup> ‘Christmas comes to us again with its word of peace, and the mystery of the holy birth deepens. . . . I want to tell you of something that happened last Friday afternoon. The Christian women come to my house that day for half an hour, which we spend in prayer for the women of the world. . . . They held out imploring hands to Christ, saying, “Make our black bodies shine for thee, Jesus our Chief. We are only black women. Thou art the great Chief of the white men, yet we too can love thee.” I tried to tell them that he was a *brown* baby, not white like us or black like them ; and that he was a helpless baby needing a mother's love and care ; that thus he came to us, the great Chief. Was it foolish to tell them that ? They so hate their black bodies, and I fear it is our fault that they do. One woman took her baby off her back, held him towards me, and said, “Small and weak like this ? Did a woman bear him and feed him ? ” “Yes,” I said. They clapped their hands and shouted their equivalent to “All hail, Baby Chief ! ” They had never realised all this before. “We thought he was a white woman's baby,” said one, which simply meant that he was ours, not theirs.’—From a private letter.

his dream of manhood, he had looked for God ; his hope had been twofold. The second suggestion of Luke's prologue is that man had looked for God simply because God had been striving to break through to man (i. 70). Luke's Gospel is that in Jesus Christ God did literally get through ; in Jesus Christ God possessed man. Man was possessed of God. He should be ' called THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH ' (i. 32). This is not dogma. Fatherhood and Sonhood <sup>1</sup> are not intellectual symbols, to be intellectually accepted and relegated to the archives of the mind. The faith which Luke hoped to inspire was assuredly not belief in a doctrine, it was trust in a Person. The Gospel is founded in a life lived in God. They ' who the white Christ hold in holy fear ' know that if God has not spoken in that life God has not spoken at all, and that the Kingdom of God on earth would be one more unattainable Utopia if the Manger of Bethlehem were not the symbol of God reaching down to us, resting among us, offering Himself to love in simplest guise as a little Child.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us meditate upon these questions—

1. Has Jesus Christ failed, as thousands of those who have broken away from him assert ?
2. Has he ever had his chance ?
3. Upon what conditions can he have his chance ?

' Draw us, O Christ, by the profoundest depths of our

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<sup>1</sup> Yet Fatherhood and Sonhood as applied to Divine relationship cannot be otherwise than symbolic. They are the nearest to Divine truth to which human language can attain.

being, that by this Thy attraction our powers and senses may run to Thee.'

'Guide, good Lord, to Thine own high purpose, all the future of this Thine own world.'

## SECTION II.—THE SYMBOL OF A CROSS

What did Luke think about the death of Jesus? What impressions concerning the Cross did he, writing long after the event and after the imagination and mind of the Church had been at work upon it, wish to convey? His reserve is great, but it is possible to follow at the least three main lines of suggestion.

### I. THE SON OF MAN MUST SUFFER.

'A man planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country for a long time. And at the season he sent unto the husbandmen a servant, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat him and sent him away empty. And he sent yet another servant, and him also they beat, and handled him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And he sent yet a third, and him also they wounded and cast him forth. And the lord of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son, it may be they will reverence him." But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned one with another saying, "This is the heir, let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours" ' (xx. 9-19. See also xiii. 31-35).

It came to pass that when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem (ix. 51).

'I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem' (xiii. 28).

‘ I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ! ’ (xii. 50).

‘ The Son of man must suffer many things . . . and be rejected . . . and be killed ’ (ix. 31-37, 43-45; xvii. 35; xviii. 31-34; xx. 17-19; xxii. 20).

*Notes.*

1. Terror of possible national disaster, jealousy of and vindictiveness towards himself, swept the Jewish people onwards to the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Jesus. Although Luke records the history with reserve of judgment, perhaps because he does so, he leaves upon the mind the mental effect of horror and loathing, not only of what those men did, but of what any man may do under the influence of passions which lurk in every man. Ordinary men, not bad men, not criminals, did this deed.

A second mental effect produced, whether intentionally or not, is that suggested by the parable which heads this section. The murder of Jesus was not merely an act committed on a certain date, the result of a sudden national crisis. The Cross is, in fact, the materialised expression of an age-long mood, not a Jewish mood, but a human mood ; a mood born of disinclination for the control of God, which when full-grown becomes a violent and effective revolt against the control of God. The historic connection between sin and the Cross is not far to seek. The Cross is the very symbol of sin.

2. There is the other side of the history. Luke takes pains to concentrate the reader’s attention upon Jesus himself. He shows that very early in his ministry Jesus realised that the conflict between

himself and the Jewish leaders was irreconcilable. Whatever the result of his mission of compassion and hope in the case of those who appeared to hear him gladly, there would be no national movement in the direction of his hopes. By far the greater part of the body of the book is occupied with an account of the last journey *via* Peræa to Jerusalem (ix. 51–xix. 44),<sup>1</sup> and the passages quoted above show how Jesus prepared himself and strove to prepare his disciples for inevitable disaster.

Arrived in Jerusalem, he made no effort to avoid his enemies, rather he took the course of events into his own hands. He lived in public. He moved daily about the temple and its courts (xix. 47; xxi. 1, 5, 6, 27). He accepted challenge of his teaching and action, and he counter-challenged his challengers. He was master of the terrible situation from first to last. The only possible conclusion is that, other methods having failed, the next step towards the end for which he lived—the conquest of the world for God and the Kingdom of God—was this, a Cross.

It is this voluntary movement of Jesus which removes him from the Order of the Martyrs, and places him in another Order altogether. Luke's point is that he did not endure a fate, but accomplished a mission.

### *For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us return to the parable of the temptations in order to make clear to ourselves whether we accept the convictions and decisions of Jesus reached at the

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew gives two (of our) chapters, Mark one, Luke ten, to this journey.

outset of his mission, with regard to the method of realising the Kingdom of God on earth, convictions and decisions which led straight forward to the Cross.

‘ Thy glory and thy worth have touched our hard hearts, and we yield ourselves, willing, to thy grace.’

## II. THE LAW OF THE CROSS.

‘ Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall save it’ (xvii. 33. Also ix. 23-26).

‘ Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?’ (xxiv. 26).

‘ Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem’ (xxiv. 45, 46).

‘ To give knowledge of salvation unto His people  
In the remission of their sins ;  
Because of the heart of mercy of our God,  
Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,  
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of  
death ;  
To guide our feet into the way of peace’ (i. 67-79).

### Notes.

1. The law which governed the life of Jesus was the Law of Love, the law of the gift of the whole self to or for another or others. This law is, as we have seen, the very motive and mode of the Divine Order, the one rule of life known within the Kingdom of God. Jesus chose obedience to the law (xii. 49, 56 ; xiii. 31-36) ; he expounded it constantly (vi. 20 ; ix. 23 ; xiv. 26) ; he made it reckon for every particle of its worth in every act of his life. We cannot know whether in another world than ours obedience to

Love would lead to suffering and death. The results of such obedience must differ—they differ among ourselves—according to the conditions under which it is exercised. Given the Law, given revolt from the Law (exemplified in the mood of the Jewish leaders), and a Cross is inevitable.

But Luke's contention is that Love is not balked. If the Kingdom of God is to be realised on earth, its law and motive and mode must be realised, and this at whatsoever cost. Words had failed; a life, the most loving ever lived, had failed; these of themselves had proved insufficient. But Love makes no reserves for Self. It remained that where the spirit of hate did its utmost the spirit of love should do its utmost also; the Cross is the symbol for all time of the transmuting power of pure love. Love triumphed through a Cross.

“ ‘He is dead,’ we cried; and even amid that gloom  
The wintry veil was rent’;

at what cost the sacred sorrow of Gethsemane alone tells.

‘I must be in the concerns of my Father,’ Jesus had said as a little boy.

‘Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done,’ he said in Gethsemane.

There is an element of profusion and waste which seems to have been needful to our understanding of Fatherhood and Sonhood and Brotherhood, that trinity of mutual relationship which is the only Kingdom of God, the only possible ‘social Christianity.’

2. Luke leaves much unsaid simply because there

is much which cannot be said.<sup>1</sup> But it cannot have been without purpose that he tells the story of the crucified thief. Here are sin and love, penitence and forgiveness, trust and grace, literally meeting at the Cross. The connection between the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sin is obviously present in his mind, for the tender word of forgiveness is a very large part of the message of love, and Luke's is the Gospel of forgiveness. 'The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin.' 'This day with me in Paradise.'

*Forgiveness and a new start.* From the song of Zacharias to this word of welcome to the thief Luke's Gospel is one gracious message of hope. The emphasis is never laid upon the greatness of the sin, it is always laid upon the possibilities of the future. If through his royal self-giving Jesus meets this man or any man—Simon Peter (v. 1-11); the paralytic (v. 17-26); the Magdalen (vii. 36-50); a prodigal son (xv. 11-32); Zaccheus (xix. 1-10)—just where the sense of sin presses most heavily, it is only that he may lift the burden and set him joyously upon his way. Remission and Redemption are never separated.

3. That the symbol of the Cross has suffered from the emphasis laid upon itself, as if *it* were the centre of Christian faith and hope and worship, most of us acknowledge. Luke gives no excuse for such mistaken emphasis. Not the Cross but he who yielded himself upon the Cross is the messenger of redemption. If image be needful, the crucifix, not the cross, is the true image. Glib and shallow phraseology, the

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<sup>1</sup> The attempt to say everything has led to much limitation, much misunderstanding, much painful controversy.

manipulation of souls, enforced conviction of sin, a convention or process of religious experience—there is no hint in the Gospel that Jesus used such methods. He took men as they were and where they were, and drew them to himself. His ambassadors can do no better. If Jesus and any man, woman, or child may but meet, he will do his own work in his own way.

For, if any experience in the whole of life is individual and incommunicable, it is the meeting of the soul with the Lord of Life and Love, when he reveals to it the meaning for it of the symbol of the Cross.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

In times of new sincerity we fall from words and phrases which seem to us to have lost their meaning ; but however statement may change, truth must remain unchangeable. Let us make some effort to find how best we may express, as a message for our own world, some part at least of the unchangeable truth which Jesus strove to make known through his death.

‘ May the remembrance of the Cross of Jesus fill the souls of all his people with love, peace, and joy.’

‘ Give to us the vision of the mighty unseen working of Thy grace.’

### III. THE TRUE LIFE.

‘ Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it ’ (ix. 24 ; xvii. 33).

‘ If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me ’ (ix. 23 ; xiv. 27).

‘ Love . . . and ye shall be the sons of the Most High ’ (vi. 27-38).

' Do thou, when thou art turned again, strengthen thy brethren ' (xxii. 31).

The Law of Love has impressed itself deeply upon human nature ;<sup>1</sup> it is the chief witness to us of our relationship with God and our natural rights within His Kingdom. But human response to the Law is partial and often ineffectual. It is when, as conscious citizens, we fall in with the succession of those who follow the King, that the instinct becomes the active principle of life, and we begin to know both the burden and the power of a love which makes no reserves. We talk lightly enough of the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth ; if Luke interprets rightly the mind of Jesus, it will only come when each of its citizens lifts his share of the burden of love, and contributes his share of its moral force. ' It is not enough that he died once, he must be dying always.'

<sup>1</sup> A hungry little street urchin gives his scrap of bun to his hungry little sister ; a child bears punishment for a fault he did not commit to shield his weaker schoolfellow ; a brilliant student, left responsible for a family of small brothers and sisters, gives up his dreams of scholarship to toil at uncongenial business that they may have their chance ; a man rushes after a child who has strayed among the street traffic and flings him into safety at the risk of his own life ; a physician dies a martyr to his researches into the powers of the X-ray ; a priest undergoes thirty years' imprisonment, on circumstantial evidence, for a murder he did not commit, the secret of which he carried during all those years (a recent incident in Ireland) ; supreme among them all, a mother not only bears her child, but ~~loses~~ her own life in his, day after day, year after year ; these are every-day illustrations of the working of that instinct and law of our nature, which is the sign-manual of our birthright :

' The millions who, humble and nameless,  
The stern straight path have trod—  
Some call it consecration,  
*But others feel it is God.*'

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. Let us consider the world as we know it, concentrating upon any one aspect of its appalling condition, in the light of the admitted fact that 'Love is the only dynamic.'

(*E.g.* Our personal world,  
Our religious world,  
Our national world in any given part of it,  
The world of Europe in any part of it.)

2. Let us in the presence of God consider what may be our part as citizens of the Kingdom of God in bringing the force of love to bear upon those conditions, and whether we are prepared to accept our part whatever the cost may be.

'I have received, I have received at Thy hand the Cross ; I will bear it, I will bear it even unto death, as Thou hast laid it upon me.'

'Enlarge our souls with a divine charity, that we may hope all things, endure all things, and become messengers of Thy healing mercy to the grievances and infirmities of men.'

### SECTION III.—THE SYMBOLS OF AN EMPTY GRAVE AND OF A LIVING PRESENCE

#### I. CHRIST CONQUERS.

'Why seek ye him that liveth [R.V. margin] among the dead ? He is not here, but is risen ' (xxiv. 2-13).

'It was not possible that he should be holden [of death]' (Acts ii. 24).

'But that the dead are raised even Moses showed in the place concerning the bush, when he called the Lord the God

of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 'Now he is not the God of the dead but of the living ; for all live unto him ' (xx. 27-40).

'They shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God' (xiii. 23-30).

• 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation ; neither shall they say, "Lo, here !" or "Lo, there !" for lo, the Kingdom of God is within you ' (xvii. 17).

*Notes.*

'The stone was rolled away from the tomb.' 'They found not the body of the Lord Jesus.'<sup>1</sup> Then follows the growing impression of a great happening. 'Remember how he said,' satisfied the women, though their story seemed to the apostles 'idle talk.' Peter visited the grave, 'and departed to his own home, wondering at that which was come to pass.' The act of breaking bread, thus becoming host at his host's table, convinced the two at Emmaus, and the witness of hands and feet and voice eventually convinced all. The proofs of Jesus' return among them were those of a visible and tangible manhood. He was the same Jesus. 'They disbelieved for joy.' 'They worshipped.'

The impression given by Luke, writing after intuition and thought and experience had been long at work, is of a silent and quite inevitable conquest over death.

1. Jesus had always assumed immortality—the life of the so-called dead. He met men's tragic sense of impermanence and craving for a future with,

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<sup>1</sup> Luke's change of title, if the text be correct (see R.V. margin) is interesting.

'God is not the God of the dead but of the living.' But the significance of the saying, referring as it did to facts which his hearers could not verify, was easily missed. The symbol of an empty grave was needful for the clearing up of all perplexity.<sup>1</sup> It was needful, also in order to a great spiritual experience.

Jesus had died. But the living God is the God of the living, death and He can have nothing in common ; to seek the living among the dead is to deny the living God. The grave holds no life.

2. Jesus gently eluded, and weaned them from the physical contact they loved. He wore 'holy disguises.'<sup>2</sup> A spiritual fellowship was prefigured, almost at moments realised. 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' they said to each other. A mountain-top parting, when it came, was therefore no separation, it was the celebration of the ending of separation, of the beginning of an uninterrupted and everlasting communion. Thus he became the opener of all closed doors, the key to all mysteries. They found him in all environment, all circumstance, all beauty and grace and joy, all opportunity, all hope, all fruition ; and, since the world did not yet know the mysteries of the Kingdom of which he is King, he was found in all sorrow and pain, all temptation, all disciplinary experience. They could not for a moment part their lives from his, nor his from theirs.

3. It was thus that those first conscious citizens of the Kingdom of God were initiated into the next

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<sup>1</sup> How it did so for the early generations of Christians the history of the first Christian centuries fully records.

<sup>2</sup> 'Thy holy disguises are become our delight.'—Bishop Hall.

stage of their knowledge of the implications of their citizenship. The living God, Father of living souls,<sup>1</sup> presides over a universe of Life, a spiritual universe, and in it they must make their true home ; not that the material and the physical are, for their calling and purpose, the less, but that the living and the spiritual are the greater and the inclusive.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider and endeavour to set down in words the message of the empty grave—which is the symbol to us of the spiritual universe—for the need of our own time.

‘ O thou Conqueror of death, do thou come to our help.’

“ Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory be to Thee, for the peace that is from above and for the salvation from the warfare that is from beneath. Praise be to Thee ! ”

**II. PRESENCE AND POWER. 1.**

‘ He [John] shall be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb ’ (i. 15. Also i. 41, 42, 67 ; ii. 25).

‘ The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of

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<sup>1</sup> One of the tragic tragedies of the years of war was the poverty of the Christian witness to the persistence of life. It was as if we were ourselves doubtful, as indeed we are. Else why the mourning garments and the paraphernalia of death, and the broken hearts among us ? There was little wonder that bereaved men and women turned towards any direction from whence help seemed to be offered. Every seeker towards Spiritualism served an indictment upon the Church of Christ.

‘ Death remains death to the Christian as to the heathen,’ wrote one, ‘ with Grief as the Lord for both. The comfort the Christian as commonly taught and practised gives to the bereaved is theoretic only.’—Basil King in ‘ The Everlasting Doors,’ *Nash’s Magazine*, 1921.

the Most High shall overshadow thee ; wherefore also That which is to be born shall be called Holy, the Son of God ' (i. 35).

The heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form as a dove, upon him (iii. 21, 22). Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days (iv. 1). Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a fame went out concerning him . . . (iv. 14, 15).

There was delivered to him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and he opened the book and found the place where it was written—

‘ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because He hath anointed me . . . ’

And he began to say unto them, ‘ To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears ’ (iv. 16-30).

‘ With authority and power he commandeth the evil spirits, and they obey him ’ (iv. 36). ‘ (If) I by the finger of God cast out devils ’ (xi. 20).

Power came forth from him, and healed them all (vi. 19).

#### Notes.

The two books which appear in the New Testament under the name of Luke cannot be separated. They are Parts I. and II. of a continuous history. Jesus began (Acts i. 1), his ambassadors carried on. But if we are to follow the sweep of the thought of Luke we must seek a deeper than a historic unity in these little books. The very form of them arrests attention, and draws us to seek further.

Each begins with the history of a waiting time ; in each case the silence ends in a crisis recorded in pictorial language, with points of close resemblance ; in each case the crisis proves to be the introduction to a period of extraordinary vitality and power. At the touch of those concerned in the crisis the world around became alive.

In the first case Luke records the life of one Person, in the second the life of a Community of persons who followed up the life of the first.

In a true sense those two crises are the key to the books. In a true sense, that is, the subject of Luke throughout is one, *the Presence of God*. Here let us realise the first case.

In the unity of personality, the perfect balance of intellect, emotion, and will, with the perfect response of the physical powers, which distinguished Jesus among men, in the poised strength and loveliness of his character, Luke read the secret influence of the present God.

In his gift of himself, without reserve even of life to the service of men, in his endowment for leadership among men, in his victory over the powers of evil in behalf of men, in his releasing to men of the secrets of the Divine Fatherhood, of the Kingdom of the Father, of sonship and citizenship, Luke again read the mind of the present God.

In Luke's conception Jesus lived not in and for and by himself, but in and for and by God. As Jesus released himself to God, so God released Himself through Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke is the Gospel of *God getting through*.

### ***For Thought and Prayer.***

Let us meditate upon this fact of the present God during the short ministry of Jesus ; and try to gather from it some fresh knowledge of God Himself.

' Such, O my God, is the bounty of Thy goodness, and no less the patience of Thy generous hand.'

‘ Since Thou art never absent from us, let us be always present with Thee.’

**III. PRESENCE AND POWER. 2. THE SECOND CASE.**  
(The Acts and after.)

‘ He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit and with Fire ’  
(iii. 16).

‘ Behold I send forth the promise of my Father upon you ; tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high ’ (xxiv. 49 ; Acts i. 48).

Suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a mighty rushing wind . . . and there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire, and it rested upon every one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts ii. and throughout the book).

*Notes.*

There is great charm in the early sections of the book of Acts. The disciples went back obediently to Jerusalem to wait, and the waiting time was only interrupted by the apparently irrelevant election of a successor to Judas. Then came the Festival of Pentecost (see Deut. xvi. 9-12), which brought with it for them that for which they waited, an experience, individual and collective, which transformed themselves and transformed their world. The experience is told in parabolic form.

1. The immediate visible effect was the promised power of witness : they had found their Gospel and the language in which to clothe it.

2. But the true effect was that produced upon themselves, that which made their Gospel and their witness valid to themselves, as we find it in Luke’s record :

The death of fear. Sureness and sanity ;

The ending of 'compartment' life. Secular and sacred had ceased ; inspiration ; illumination ; Vitality, growth, effective energy ; the sense of unlimited possibility ;

Consciousness of the one and indivisible Kingdom of God among them ;

A vision of worlds to conquer, and consciousness of power to conquer them ;

A new and rapturous common fellowship, even common meals becoming a continuous Love Feast and Eucharist.

3. What had occurred is generally described as 'the descent of the Spirit,' which probably means very little to most of us. But the fact is, like all the divine facts we know, very simple. Hitherto all that their Master had stood for in person and in word had been *outside* of them, it was now *inside* of them ; hitherto they had *believed* his teaching, now they *knew* it. They had heard him talk, for example, about the encompassing, companying Father—very beautiful teaching but more or less remote—here was the Father Himself possessing their being. He had showed them the Empty Grave and had gone from them 'into heaven,' but here he was, enthroned among them, and making his mind known to them. 'I cannot lose the presence of my Lord . . . where he goes, I go.' His expositions of the Kingdom of God in its manifold interest they had misunderstood to the last (Acts i. 6). Now they realised something at least of the spacious significance of his vision. The Kingdom of God *is* among us !

They had stepped into a new world, or, more accurately, a new world had possessed them.

4. Pentecost focussed, made historic and prophetic and common, the supreme experience of human life, that which makes of every human soul which waits for it a twice-born soul, heir of undying life, a creature of immeasurable possibility—because God and he are at one.

*For Thought and Prayer.*

1. To make clear to ourselves the transformation which his Pentecost makes upon a man, let us make a careful study of Peter as Luke portrays him before and after Pentecost.

2. Neither the radiance nor the power has remained with the Church, except in rare glimpses. Let us consider the reasons suggested in the early chapters of the Acts, and in the same connection the possible conditions of its return to the Church of our day.

‘We pray Thee that we may know Thee—  
Not from afar as a King on high,  
But in our very souls,  
Heart of our hearts, life of our lives,  
Sustaining, directing, indwelling.’

**SECTION IV.—THE SYMBOL OF A COMMON MEAL**

He took bread and when he had given thanks, he brake it and gave to them, saying,

‘This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.’

And the cup in like manner after supper, saying,

‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, even that which is poured out for you’ (xxii. 19, 20).

‘Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me at the table’ (21–23).

Then arose a contention among them, which of them is greater (24-30).

‘I tell thee Peter, the cock shall not crow this day until thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me’ (31-34).

*Notes.*

1. Luke shows Jesus thoughtful to the last for his friends, but gives one significant hint of his own troubled spirit: he did not partake of the Passover bread and wine with them. ‘Take this,’ he said, ‘and divide it among yourselves.’ ‘I will not eat it. I will not drink . . .’ (xxii. 14-18). He then proceeded to the institution of the Supper. Luke merely records the words spoken, and passes on to tell of the betrayal by an apostle, the discussion about precedence in the Kingdom, and the boast of Peter that he will be faithful even to death.

So, according to Luke, the Feast of corporate unity was, during the very first celebration of it, the scene of treachery, wrangling, and spiritual pride.<sup>1</sup> There seems no more to be said or written than Luke has done in this, one of the saddest passages ever written. The very restraint he exercises makes his arraignment of the apostles the more poignant.

2. But if they and their successors failed to read the intention in one direction, they have leapt to meet it in others. In Host, guests and fellow-guests, through the simple act of breaking bread and tasting from a common cup, they have seen—

Commemoration,<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It has continued to be so to this day. The Church has made of the Feast of Love, as Cowper says, ‘an office key.’

<sup>2</sup> Not surely memorial, we make memorials of the dead, not of the living.

Confession of their Lord,  
 Their true posture as humble receivers of his gift of  
 himself,  
 The oneness of life between him and them, so that  
 no part of their being, opened to his presence, is  
 not penetrated by himself,  
 The bridging of time and of space, of race and of  
 language,<sup>1</sup>

and it was not long before they realised the great  
 fact which finds expression nowhere as it does at the  
 Holy Table—‘It is not enough that Christ died once ;  
 he must be dying always.’

*For Thought and Prayer.*

Let us consider quietly the problem of the broken  
 Body of Christ ; how especially ordinary men and  
 women may work towards its uniting : as by the  
 spirit of desire for unity, by willingness to see the other  
 side as well as one’s own, by conserving one’s con-  
 tribution not for one’s own side but for the gift it  
 may make to the whole, by sharing in all possible  
 ways in movements towards a better understanding.

‘Bow down Thy gracious eye and pity the frailties of our  
 imperfect nature ; reach forth Thy hand and strengthen us,  
 that nothing divert our advance towards Thee.’

‘One thing we desire . . . one spark of the celestial Fire  
 to kindle within us the love of our God.’

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Eugene Stock told of his difficulty in expressing<sup>\*</sup> fellowship with Indian fellow-Christians owing to lack of a common tongue, until the first time he was present at the celebration of this Sacrament. Here was the common tongue. In the vestry at the close he and the Indian pastor clasped hands. ‘Hallelujah !’ exclaimed Dr. Stock. ‘Amen,’ responded the pastor.





